Flying Snake

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THE SKIN OF A STELLER`S SEA COW?

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ABOUT FLYING SNAKE

Flying Snake is available from:
Richard Muirhead
a.k.a. Dr.Devo.
112 High St,
Macclesfield,
Cheshire,
SK11 7QQ
UK
http://homepage.ntlworld.com/richmuirhead/cryptozoology/

Tel: 01625 869048

Mike Hardcastle: Sub - Editor,NSW, Australia.
www.cosmicpolymath.com
Zvi Ron: Israel correspondent.
Carl P. Marshall: Warwickshire correspondent and Zoological Consultant.
Artist: Emmy Rose Dawn

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DR DEVOS DIARY

"For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames." Christopher Smart `Rejoice in the Lamb`.Poet,naturalist,lunatic (1722-1771)

"The lunatic, the lover,and the poet are of imagination all the same." Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night`s Dream.

Well wey,hey!! Welcome to another crypto-packed cocktail of strange animal stories from around history and through time, past,present and future,oops,slip of the typing key board just then.

But seriously,seriously, as I listen to `Inwards` a Big Country song and look out of my window at a Spring vista of roof tops,aerials, discarded Coke cans,broken clothes pegs and well fed cats (well, better fed than I feed myself) I contemplate the dizzy spin in my washing machine combined with ego centric "selfies" and distant wars that life is now in 2014, not to mention shampoo that removes yellow-ness in the hair and random acts of cruelty to soveriegn nations (i.e. Ukraine) . Indeed it`s suprising that there`s time to fit in being the editor of the most famous cryptozoology - Fortean - folkore magazine the Universe has ever seen. That is a slight exageration as I still have a static circulation of about 20 people which is pretty poor, but the fact that F.S exists at all is a minor miracle given my techno-phobia. (Big Country just sang " Now we play our final hand in" `1000 Stars` which is worrying!) But briefly going back to Ukraine and Russia- must remember to file this under `Utterly Irrelevant to Cryptozoology- I thought up this acronym - P.U.T.I.N. - Poetry Unites Troubled Independent Nations. Cool, wot,wot?! As far as research has been going since the publication of F.S 6,it`s been a pretty amazing trip. I am particularly pleased about the story of the supposed (and it probably was just "supposed") Steller`s Sea Cow hide. I plead guilty to sitting on the fence . Karl Shuker has contributed a piece on flying frogs and toads and Richard George is back with a look into mystery birds in classical Roman literature. Future projects include a web site comprising an index of Flying Snakes 1-7 if I can afford it. Also I am looking into publishing a historical account of the social phenomenum of sending messages in bottles. So until F.S. 8, toodle-pip!

The complete skin of a Steller`s Sea - Cow?

Richard Muirhead

Ceremonial Robe Comes From Alaska.

Fig 1. The hide.

This photo appeared in the Kansas City Star of April 6th 1956 along with the following story:" Unrolling an unwieldy rug-like covering that was standing in the corner of the living room behind an upholstered chair, Mrs Faye Keyton, 11211 East Tenth street, Intercity district, laughed exclaiming: " I really don`t know what we`re going to do with it, but it has created quite a bit of excitement."

Inherits Robe

As she unwound the stiff leather robe from a cardboard tube, Mrs Keyton explained that it was an Alaskan Indian burial robe which she and her brother, W.L. Shafer, 12308 East Forty-second street, Independence, had inherited with other antiques from an aunt, Miss Myrtle Shafer, Cass County, who died last May. The word about the possession has gotten around, she said, and some people express disappointment after they see it.

“We`ve had antique collectors drop in to see it, and other folks ring the doorbell and ask to look at `that sea cow hide` as they call it” she added. Joining in the family interest over the robe with Faye Keyton are her husband, J.R. Keyton, are their son, Jimmie,11, who has displayed it at school, and their small blond daughter, Joann, 3.

Joann, who usually is first to answer the telephone, often calls her mother to the wire with the announcement that “ someone wants to talk about the sea cow.” The youngster believes the majority of the calls are about their recent acquisition.

Age is Unknown

Nobody who has seen the robe has the slightest notion how old it is, but it was made from a Steller`s sea cow , a sea animal which became extinct soon after 1740. The sea cow, which Bering found common near the Asiatic coast in the early part of the 1700s, had fin-like feet and a small head resembling a cow, Mrs Keyton explained. Brown and tan markings are clear on the robe. It has a red wool flannel border.

The gift came to her and her brother in a rather roundabout way. Mrs Keyton`s aunt inherited it from Jim Willoughby, a distant relative who also lived in Cass County. The robe was originally his father`s . The elder man, Dick Willoughby, lived in Alaska more than half a century. He spoke the Indian language and was made a chief there. Among his possessions was the robe, which had been placed over him in a ceremony at the time of his death.

Mrs Keyton is shown with the Indian ceremonial robe. (1)

†

So what are we to make of this? In November 1913, an Ohio newspaper recorded the donation of part of an elephant tusk to a museum in the basement of a public library by W.L. Shafer (2). It turns out that there is a photograph in the collection of Alaska State Library`s Digital Archive which they have given me permission to re-produce , see page 9, showing Dick Willoughby with the Sea Cow hide. Professor Willoughby was a bit of a Fortean too, he took a photo of a “mirage city”now widely believed to be a fake , in reality Bristol in the U.K. :”The Alaskan mining prospector “Professor “ Dick Willoughby was looking out across the Muir Glacier in June 1888 when he caught a glimpse of a most remarkable sight - the outline of a

modern city skyline looming out of the misty horizon. Although the mirage lasted only a few minutes, he was able to photograph it to prove that he had indeed seen it. Willoughby speculated that what he had seen was the reflection of a real city many thousands of miles away…In fact the " Professor" was a notorious practical joker and teller of tall tales, not to mention being a shrewd businessman who netted himself a lucrative mining deal in San Francisco worth $67,000. (3)

He lived from 1832 to 1902, so the Steller`s Sea Cow robe which covered him at his funeral dates from long after the last Sea Cow is *supposed* to have been killed, but this doesn`t tell us when the hide was first procured. Willoughby is described as the " Juneau pioneer". Willoughby Cove and Willoughby island are named after him. (4) The cove is on the south shore of Lemesurier island and Willoughby Island is in Glacier Bay, southeastern Alaska. It is perhaps appropriate, maybe too appropriate from a Fortean perspective that he was buried in a Steller`s Sea Cow hide, by which I mean this was the culmination of a life full of tall tales such as the mirage mentioned above (said in his obituary in the Yukon Sun May 18th 1902 to have been his biggest yarn,but also: A big meteor falling in Texas, a highly dangerous club-footed bear, never having seen a rail road or having his photograph taken, etc.)

Fig 2. Map of Alaska

Wikipedia Creative Commons

Perhaps the most telling part of his obituary is the following paragraph : "In his little house were curios which he had gathered from different parts of the Alaskan coast, many of them being of Indian origin. He would frequently make a present of one or more of them to lady tourists and would invariably also donate a lurid story of something to the effect that this match safe or that dirk knife, or what not, had been dug up by him at the head of Glacier bay, from where it had been dropped by the Russians of seventy-five years ago. The stories were always believed and many of them have gotten into print in Eastern accounts of Alaska lore." (5)

http://www.flickriver.com/photos/30001692@N04/5446547790/

The link above shows a photograph of a piece of skin of a Steller`s Sea Cow at the Überseemuseum in Bremen, taken on January 29th 2011.

It is possible of course that the hide that fell into the hands of Mr Willoughby, came into the indigenous peoples hands via trade with Russians.

This link shows the location of remains of the Steller`s Sea Cow in museums around the world: http://www.hans-rothauscher.de/steller/museums.htm

There is no mention of a complete skin. A significant problem is that surviving portions of the Sea Cow skin look rough, like the bark of a tree whilst the Willoughby skin is smooth, like it`s been tanned. Perhaps it is a whale skin? Supposedly Sea Cow`s had spots on their skin, not rings as in the photos. Richard George has the following comment to make:"I am certain that the circular shapes are painted" The Australian cutting (of 1924,see page 10) is of great interest, as I`ve heard about SSC reports from the Aleutians in the 19th century. Bear in mind that this archipelago is vast, extending well over half way across the Bering Sea towards Kamchatka. The date, 1923, fills a gap in our narrative and is almost exactly equidistant between the 1880s (" forty years ago") and the Cape Na-varin sighting of 1962. The Aleutians are also the most likely source for the Alaskan burial robe. Could it be located, and its date established?" As of now, mid April 2014,it hasn`t.

Fig 3

Richard Willoughby with the skin - probably shortly before 1902.

Reproduced with permission of Alaska State Library, J Simpson MacKinnon Photo Collection ASL-P14-026

According to the Gippsland Times of January 15th 1924 page 4:

SEA-COW SEEN

The Arctic sea-cow, thought to have been extinct for forty years has been seen again. Native fishermen of the Aleutian Islands declare that when fishing off the islands one or more of these creatures have been seen. In the hindquarters they appear to be true fish, but in the head and neck they were ox-like.

The huge sea-cow often weighs 4,000lb and is 40ft long. Seaweed grows in miniature forests along the Aleutician Islands, and the sea-cows once pastured there. They possess a habit of herding together like cattle, snorting and puffing. The hind legs were used as a single fin, but the front fins were used as legs to support the animal. There were udders between the forelegs, and plates instead of teeth.

The last time a sea-cow was seen by white men was forty years ago[1] , over a hundred years after its discovery.

Thanks to Glen Vaudrey who sent me this story in an e-mail on February 23rd. He pointed out that although the phrase "sea-cow" is used another animal may be referred to.

The skin could of course be that of a minke whale, a hump back whale, or a northern right whale dolphin or some other species. These are extant off British Columbia. "

There is a statement in Contributions to The History of the Commander Islands No. 2 - Investigations Relating to the Date of the Extermination of Steller`s Sea Cow by Leonard Stejneger as follws, relating to his conversation with Pitr Vasilijef Burdukovskij :

" He remembers very little of what his father told him about the sea-cow, but recals that nothing else than the kidneys was eaten, and that the hide was used for " *bajdara"* [2], but no bajdara covered with the hide of the sea cow lasted so long that he himself has ever seen one or even the remnants of one…Nordenskjold`s statement that the hide was so thick that it could be split in two, one hide thus being sufficient for one *bajdara*, is equally

[1] This would be about 1884 - Rich

[2] Bajdara - skin boat

erroneous."(6) Hans Rothauser,an expert on the S.S.C told me: : "The Steller's description of the skin (Walter Miller's Translation):
It is covered with a thick hide, more like unto the bark of an ancient oak than unto the skin of an animal; the manatee's (he thought this was a manatee he had heard of) hide is
black, mangy, wrinkled, rough, hard, and tough; it is void of hairs, and almost impervious to an ax or to the point of a hook. It is an inch thick, and a transverse section of it is very like unto ebony both in smoothness and in color. This exterior cortex, however, is not skin (cutis), but cuticle (cuticula); but in the dorsal region it is smooth. From the nape to the caudal fin the surface is uneven with nothing but circular wrinkles, but the sides are exceedingly rough, especially about the head, and bristling with many cup-shaped prominences like stemless mushrooms (pezicas). This cuticle which surrounds the whole body like a crust is frequently an inch in thickness; and it is composed of nothing but tubules...
This does not sound like a skin of which fur blankets can be made? There is only one way to find out: a DNA test." (7) I concur!

In 2010 there was a sighting of an apparent S.S.C off Washington state by Chuck Crosby as reported on Cryptomundo. " It was dark like very dark grey or black. I did not get close enough to tell if it had smooth skin or if it had whiskers or hair. It did not have hair like a person. (8)

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4. Dictionary of Alaska Place Names . Donald J.Orth 1967 p. 1049.

5. Obituary of Richard Willoughby: The Yukon Sun May 18th 1902 p. 3

6. Leonard Stejneger Contributions to the History of the Commander Islands. No. 2 - Investigations Relating to the Date of the Extermination of Steller`s Sea-Cow p. 182.

7. E-mail from Hans Rothauser March 12th 2014

8. http://cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/sea-cowwa-2010/ Cryptomundo September 23rd 2010.

†

Richard George wrote `The Uncertain Fate of Steller`s Sea Cow ` in Flying Snake 3.

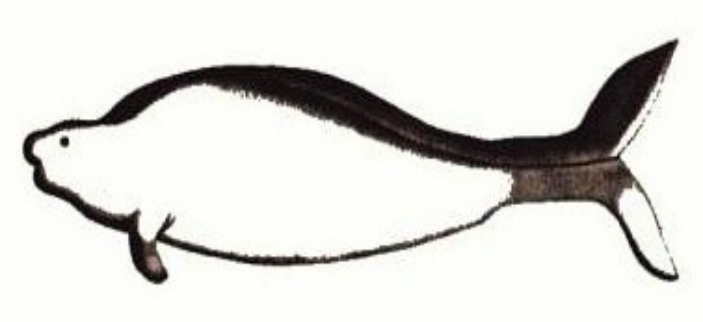

Fig 4. Drawing thought to be the only remaining illustration of the Steller`s Sea Cow, based on a dead female ,examined by Steller in 1743. Wikipedia Creative Commons.

WINGED TOADS AND FLYING FROGS.

Emailed by Dr Karl Shuker to Mr Richard Muirhead, the Editor, at *Flying Snake* on 8 April 2014.

The flying toad referred to in my book *From Flying Toads To Snakes With Wings* (1997) was an obscure mystery beast known as the llamhigyn y dwr or water-leaper, which supposedly originated in traditional Welsh mythology. A few years ago, however, it was convincingly exposed by Oll Lewis of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) as a modern-day hoax, with no basis in Welsh mythology at all.

Nevertheless, this was not the death-knell for cryptozoological amphibians of the aerial kind. For in an article published within the November 2012 issue of *Flying Snake*, its editor Richard Muirhead reproduced a letter dated 25 September 1662 that described a mysterious creature resembling a winged toad lately seen by several people in the vicinity of the letter writer's hometown of Mendham in Suffolk, England.

Moreover, upon reading Richard's article I remembered an equally fascinating, comparable report that I'd received in May 2011, courtesy of French cryptozoological correspondent Raphael Marlière, but which I hadn't documented anywhere. So here it is, together with some traditional folklore appertaining to legendary flying frogs in Indonesia.

A COLONY OF WINGED TOADS IN FRANCE?

In an article from 1990 within the periodical *Communications*, French cryptozoologist Jean-Jacques Barloy presented a very curious report of supposed winged toads. It consisted of a letter written to him on 26 August 1985 by correspondent Marcel Buisson of Alençon.

In this letter, Buisson claimed that his father had told him that during the years 1916-1921, the park of a castle near Fresnay-sur-Sarthe in north-western France had harboured about 30 flying toads. These creatures were allegedly identical in general appearance to common toads except for one remarkable extra feature – a pair of small membranous wings similar to those of bats. They would fly away if anyone approached to within 3 ft of them, but as their flight was heavy, it never exceeded 30 ft before they came back down to the ground. They tended to be seen under poplar trees, along the main driveway of the park. One specimen was supposedly killed by Buisson's father, but was not preserved because he had no interest in it.

Not surprisingly, Barloy was thoroughly perplexed by this report. Indeed, he was unable to offer any reasonable explanation - apart from speculating as to whether they represented either some freak, teratological toad variety, or, even more exotically, a released colony of one of Asia's many species of gliding frog, all of which belong to the genus *Rhacophorus*. First brought to scientific attention by evolutionist Alfred Russel Wallace during the mid-1800 and sometimes loosely referred to as flying frogs, in reality they are only capable of passive gliding rather than actively-powered flight, and are not even equipped with wing-like gliding membranes (as are Asia's famous gliding lizards of the genus *Draco*). Instead, they glide by spreading out their legs and extending their greatly-enlarged interdigital (toe-linking) membranes when leaping from trees in their native rainforest domain, enabling them to glide considerable distances through the air.

As for the French winged toads constituting freak toads that had somehow developed wings or wing-like gliding membranes by virtue of some developmental abnormality: surely such extraordinary creatures would be deemed much too precious to be allowed simply to live unfettered and unprotected in the park, and thereby take their chances against the ever-present threat of predation from foxes, cats, and other carnivorous animals.What a tragedy that the killed specimen was not preserved – and what happened to these astonishing creatures after 1921? Once again, as with the singular example from Suffolk whose details were unearthed by Richard, we have a reputed record of winged toads that defies any satisfactory explanation.

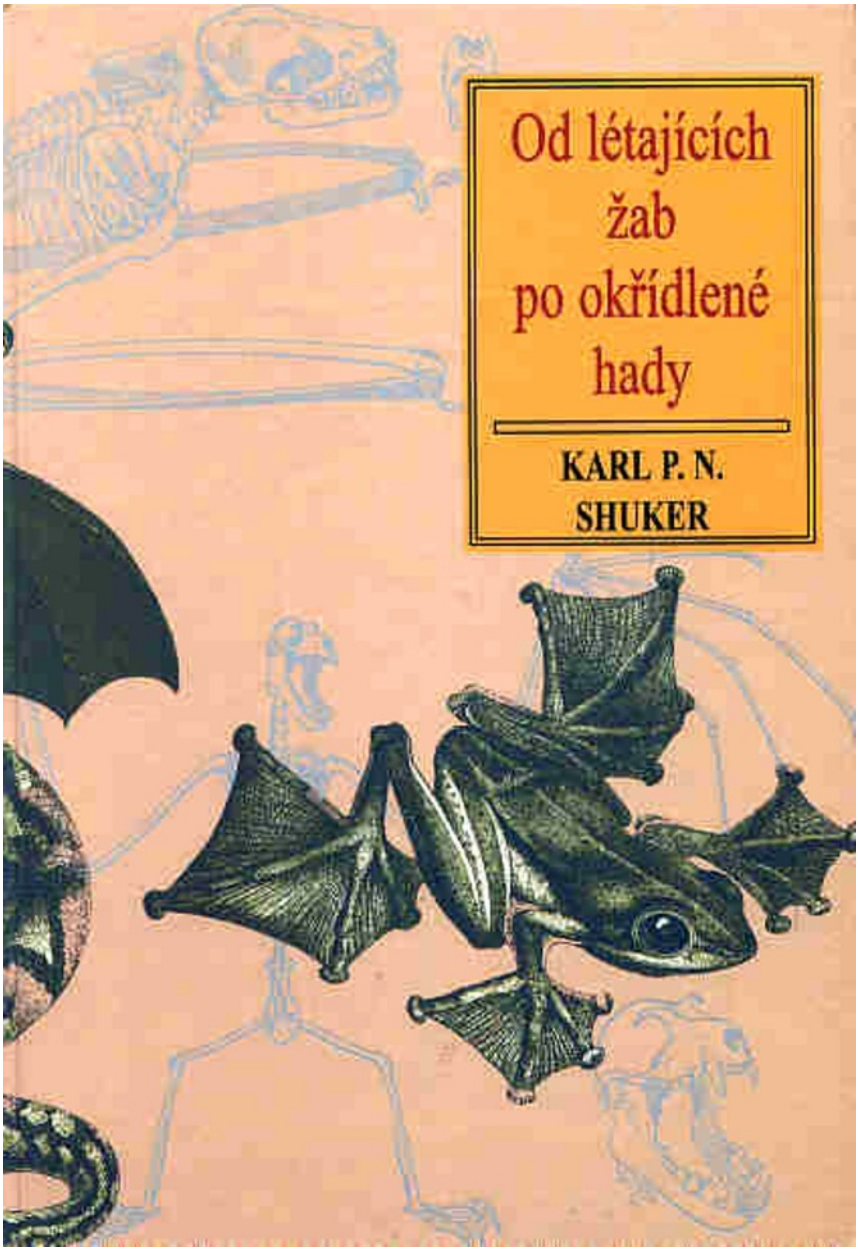

Fig 1. Cover of Czech edition of From Flying Toads to Snakes with Wings.

WINGED TOADS – OR FLYING FROGS - IN INDONESIA?

Indonesia has a long folkloric tradition with regard to winged anurans (frogs and toads). According to legend, a flying frog is a very special frog that after going through the normal metamorphosis from a water-dwelling tadpole to an adult frog that can live either in the water or on land, then progresses through an additional metamorphic stage, in which it grows wings and thus becomes a frog that can live in the water, on land, or in the air. Consequently, this extraordinary creature symbolises change and transformation on a spiritual level, and is also a bringer of good fortune, because it can mediate between the elements of water, earth, and air.

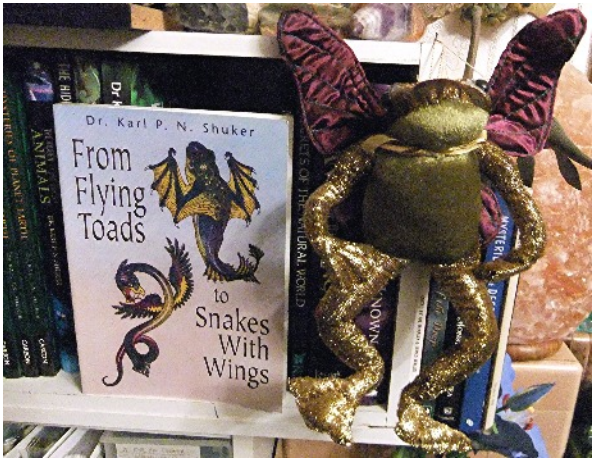

Fig 2. Karl`s flying toad plush toy.

The Indonesian island of Bali in particular is famous for its beautiful, multi-coloured wooden carvings of flying frogs (although some more closely resemble toads than frogs), which are frequently suspended over the cribs of babies to protect them.They are also hung as mobiles over the doorways of the homes of menopausal women, who, by progressing from their years as care-givers to the more liberating years as wise women, are thereby transforming from the physical to the spiritual.

But from where has the notion of flying, winged frogs in Indonesia originated? Again, the most obvious sources of inspiration, and much more likely too in this instance than in the case of the French flying toads, are Asia's *Rhacophorus* gliding frogs. At least a dozen species occur in Indonesia, including Boulenger's *R. modestus*, the Sumatran *R. poecilonotus*, Javan *R. margaritifer*, Sulawesi *R. edentulus*, and Wallace's *R. nigropalmatus*. Consequently, the sight of such remarkable amphibians gliding through the air may well have been sufficient to inspire fables and superstitions featuring greatly-elaborated, exaggerated versions sporting bona fide wings.

A much less likely but not impossible alternative possibility is that there is – or once was – an undiscovered creature in Indonesia that at least superficially resembled a frog (or toad) with wings or wing-like gliding membranes.

FLYING TOADS – AT A MARKET NEAR YOU!

Although regrettably not of the living variety, flying toads and frogs with wings are by no means as difficult to encounter as you may suppose.

As someone who has authored a book entitled *From Flying Toads To Snakes With Wings*, I was never going to abandon a damaged flying toad when I encountered it several years ago at a bric-a-brac market. As seen here, it is an enchanting plush toy with flexible wings, but, sadly, there was a small hole in its back through which some plush had begun to protrude. Thanks to the deft application of some fabric glue, however, the hole is no more, and said flying toad now resides in fully-restored comfort in my study.
So too does a second flying toad, this time a Balinese specimen carved out of wood, brightly painted, and with removable wings. One Sunday in summer 2012, I had spent a pleasant morning wandering around a very large outdoor car boot sale not too far from my home, but by the time that I'd walked down all of the aisles twice it was drawing to a close, with most of the sellers packing their unsold items away, ready to depart. Nevertheless, I decided to take a final look at the few stalls that were still selling, but when I came to one of them, I realised that it included a side-stand I hadn't noticed during

Fig 3 Balinese Wooden Mobile of a Flying Toad

either of my previous visits to it that morning. And there, hanging forlornly from that hitherto-overlooked side-stand, was a charming carved Balinese wooden mobile of a flying toad, which I swiftly purchased for under £5.

Some weeks earlier, I had seen a trio of extremely large Balinese winged frog carvings – I hesitate to call them flying frogs due to their substantial size (the biggest stood about 3 ft tall) – propped up against a car wheel and lying on the ground at a different car boot sale. Yet despite their poor state of preservation (their paint was peeling badly, and chunks of their wood had begun to split), their seller was asking £30 for each one. So, regrettably, these carvings did not find themselves added to my collection. Instead, I contented myself with snapping a few photographs of them, including the photo reproduced in this article.

As for the living winged toads of France: without a specimen for scientific examination, they are destined to remain unsolved anomalies in the vast chronicles of cryptozoology for the foreseeable future.

* * * * *

ACCOMPANYING ILLUSTRATIONS:

1) The Czech edition of my book *From Flying Toads To Snakes With Wings*, featuring on its front cover an engraving from 1896 of a Javan gliding frog *Rhacophorus margaritifer* (© Dr Karl Shuker)

2) My flying toad plush toy, rescued and repaired (© Dr Karl Shuker)

3) My Balinese wooden mobile of a flying toad (© Dr Karl Shuker)

Mystery Big Bird and Other Strange Fowl

Richard Colborne

Part One

This is a transcript of a posting by Richard to the Manchester Birding Forum["you" or "your" in the text doesn`t refer to Richard Muirhead]:

My name is Richard Colborne; I'm in no way an expert on birds, but in searching for information about Wagtails I found your article on same, and I immediately saw that you have a particular keenness for detail and accuracy. I'm rather like this myself, but my interest is in flowering trees and shrubs (certain genera especially) and formerly in certain aspects of archaeology; a thing I hope to get back to one day.

About 5 years ago, my mother and I were sitting at the window, chatting (the double-glazed window was closed), when a small bird alighted on the lawn only several feet away from us. We were both amazed, and I for one thought at first we were watching an escapee: few birds in Britain have such exotic plumage.

Having picked up something in its beak that only he or she could see, the little bird obliged us by flying up onto a fence post, and stood there wagging its tail up and down; looking right in our direction.It became very clear to me that the bird was not only a Wagtail, but it bore a strong resemblance to a Grey Wagtail, though in the colour of it's breast alone it varied. Instead of being yellow, the breast was bright orange, except for around the edge, which was the usual shade.

Other parts which are usually yellow were all present and correct, as were other markings, though being unaccustomed to observing birds I could have missed some other minor detail.It became very clear to me that the bird was not only a Wagtail, but it bore a strong resemblance to a Grey Wagtail, though in the colour of it's breast alone it varied. Instead of being yellow, the breast was bright orange, except for around the edge, which was the usual shade.

Because more information is appearing on the internet regularly, I decided to search again for the identity of the above described bird. I'm familiar with Leucistic, albino, and melanistic forms, but a bright orange breast would not to my way of thinking be the result of a genetic defect.

A year or two earlier I had joined the British Garden Birds forum; having found a dead bird in the street, which was soon identified as a Whitethroat. I may have enquired about the above Wagtail but I don`t remember.

However;along with reporting sightings of a number of common birds or asked for help in identifying some, I have posted about several unusual sightings. While I'm at it, I'll cover those too, though I don't expect you to spend time reading all this and answering me, if you are busy. May I apologise for the long intrusion.

The following story is slightly edited. (The 3rd December 2011, just after 2 pm) …I was driving out of Bredon, Worcestershire, when I saw a very odd bird. My approach caused a mixed flock to fly up from where they were feeding on a footpath under an oak tree. Among them was a bird that looked like a Jay, but with plumage reminiscent of a cock Pheasant! I turned the car around to get another look, and as I approached the spot from the opposite direction, the flock flew up again and it included a seemingly undersize cock Pheasant.

Problem solved! …but it wasn't!

As I approached again from the original direction, the feeding flock was reforming and the strange bird was flying down from a tree. It barely touched down before my approach scared it off and it flew back into a tree. I positioned my car a few tens of yards away and waited. Alas, the traffic was building up and the mixed flock barely had a chance to reform. Over the next 20 minutes I watched the bird mainly from a distance … seeing it

waiting in the branches of trees, in flight, and only feeding on the ground for about 30 seconds with its tail in the air towards me.

The plumage colours of which I am certain were: red, black, pale cream or off-white. My initial impression was of golden brown on the upper surfaces from neck downwards… I also think it had some metallic blue or green; perhaps the collar.

This bird viciously attacked the ground, throwing up stuff into the air; which was maybe the reason why the mixed flock contained a Robin, Dunnocks, and Wood Pigeons. It had a black beak like a Jay, if slightly longer. It was the size of a Jay or very slightly bigger. Around the vent and a little forward it was clearly pale cream or off-white. Its long tail was black or largely so; the tail was certainly black beneath. My impression was that the head was red (bright red) and it had a collar around its neck. The collar was white, blue, green, two of those colours; I don't know. As I never got a clear view of the upper surfaces again, after my initial approach, I have to assume they were brown. Unfortunately when it was feeding I could only see part of the head briefly when it raised its big black beak, though there was definitely some red on the head.

I can eliminate an escaped Parrot, despite the bright plumage, and I don't think it was any native Woodpecker, especially not with such a heavy beak.

I returned later to examine the ground, but could find no signs of disturbance.

There were suggestions from fellow members, of things like Turkeys and Partridges in pear trees, but then Christmas was approaching! Red Legged Partridge was a sensible suggestion I suppose, as it is something one would expect to see in the midlands of England (I see them often), but it definitely wasn't a Partridge. It was definitely Jay-like, though I spent hours combing the internet and drew a blank.

Some months after the above sighting, I thought, while driving on the same road, that

I was seeing the same bird again: I regularly look for it.

I saw a bird with a partly red head flying into my path from the left, and seemingly on a collision course with the windscreen of my car. Missing the windscreen by no more than a foot, the bird flew on intact, and I was left realising that I'd seen a woodpecker, but an unusual one. It was like a Green Woodpecker, but I was puzzled by an apparent lack of black on it's face and a prominent eye-stripe.

In a couple of hours I'd cleared this one up for myself. I'd seen a Green Woodpecker with slight characteristics of a Laced Woodpecker. Puzzlingly, the territory of the two species seems to be quite well separated.

My next report was greeted with derision when posted on the British Garden Birds forum. Though clearly not a garden bird, I would have expected someone to have identified it for me. However; a bird of this size might escape the attention of some people, but not that of serious and experienced bird watchers, such as yourself.

Friday the 25th May (2012) I was visiting Batsford Arboretum (Moreton in Marsh, Glos. GL56 9AB), to use my new camera for close up pictures… I arrived back at my car exhausted and hungry, and being unaccustomed to using a camera for bird photography (because my last camera wouldn't) I never once though to attempt to snap this big bird!

When I first looked up to see this bird I honestly thought I was seeing a hang-glider in difficulty! I thought I was looking at a man with wings and his legs dangling; wobbling about like crazy, and I said to myself; OMG he's coming down! Then I realised I was looking at a gynormous bird very slowly riding an air current and close to stall speed. I was parked under the shade of some oak trees and as I looked up through the branches I saw this bird glide slowly overhead at what I would estimate as being 60 – 100 feet altitude. I can't estimate its wingspan from tip to tip well, but we are certainly talking feet, not inches. 4 – 5 feet?

About five minutes later the bird returned briefly, then circled about ¼ mile away, then overhead. It was in view intermittently for about 10 minutes, and only once did I see it half flap its wings. It`s head/neck…and its tail stubby.

But its most striking features were its wings. From the body they curved first back and then forward to slender points at the tips: the points were slightly forward of the leading edges. On one approach this bird turned up its wingtips in graceful curves.

I was surprised that I could see the individual wing feathers… Against the sky the bird looked black or at least dark in colour, but the wing feathers were pale or translucent with dark margins. Immediately I was struck by how parallel these feathers were…

Another feature of this bird were its long legs. Its feet were just blobs on the ends, so I presume the toes were curled. I can`t say if it had talons (I don`t think so) or webbed feet! It wasn`t pink, so I don`t think it was a Flamingo!

To be continued…

Some entombed frog and toad reports from Britain in 1894-95

FROGS FOUND IN CLAY

Manchester City News August 18th 1894

MOSS SIDE, August 15

Within the box accompanying this are a few small specimens of the frog family, which I saw obtained at the bottom of an excavation for a new house the locality of which is on the Stockport Road, Timperley, at its junction with Bloomsbury Lane on the Brook`s Estate. They appear to have been deposited on the surface of the sandstone and buried under the alluvial deposits of clay and soil about six feet deep. Over twenty of them have been caught, and more no doubt can be had. Mr Charles Marston reported that he had taken two living lizards from the same spot, and the adjoining ground gave a large toad that was exposed by the pick of one of his workmen in the rock on which he was working. Enclosed is Mr Marston`s verification. Of what species are these specimen`s taken from the living clay?

J. NICHOLSON

†

The note addressed to Mr Nicholson by Mr Charles Marston , contractor and builder, is as follows: - **STOCKPORT ROAD,TIMPERLEY**

Enclosed you will find some small frogs which I have taken out of the ground upon which I am going to build. These were found some six feet below the ground level. First we had soil for twelve to fifteen inches; then the rest of the ground is clay till you come to till you come to sandstone - stone; and the frogs were were in the rock head between the rock and the clay. Some years ago we found a toad at the same depth, but in between a block of stone. When the frogs were first discovered they were almost dormant, but in twelve hours they were jumping about.

FROGS FOUND IN CLAY

Manchester City News August 25th 1894

SANDIWAY, CHESHIRE

The account of the finding of the Frogs in clay in last Saturday`s issue is particularly interesting to me, as I know the place where they were discovered and am well acquainted with Mr Charles Marston.

Historians generally credit the Toad with the fame of occasionally causing a sensation by turning up unaccountably in the hollows of trees and beds of rocks, though one and all throw discredit upon the possibility of the reptile living for any lengthened period without food,air, or moisture. Some aperture, they aver, must be left by which sustenance in the shape most needed by the prisoner is admitted. It is a well-known fact that a Toad or Frog, placed upon a piece of wet blotting paper, will quickly absorb the moisture into the skin, which has the power of taking up and retaining a large quantity sufficient to last for an extended time. One authority is supposed to have buried a Toad in a flower pot, porous, of course , and with a hole in it, and left it in the ground for twenty years; and upon exhumation the Toad was found to have grown considerably in size.

The feature of Mr. Marston`s find is that the toads are young ones. Is it not possible that their bed may have been the of some natural drainage , along which an adult specimen may have wandered and deposited its spawn? The chief difference between the Frog and the Toad is that the former is light and nimble and leaps, and the latter is heavy and slow and crawls. There are,of course, other minor structural differences. **CHARLES FALKNER**

†

DARWIN HOUSE, BURNLEY

Being doubtful about small frogs having being found under clay and soil at a depth of six feet ,in a torpid state, I hurried off to Timperley to ascertain on the spot if this were so. As usual, I found the whole business, I will not say a fraud,but a poor burlesque. A builder had removed soil and clay to the depth of six feet, for a couple of cellars, close to a field of cabbages;and during the late inclement weather these lively batrachians,

just emerging from their amphibious habits and conditions, and being a little frisky, have at one bound leapt flop into this cellar space,and,unable to jump back, have burrowed slightly into the soft bottom. We found one specimen just under a small clod, but talk of being dormant! Why, Mr Editor, as soon as I put him on the surface again, at about two leaps he was back among his favourite cabbages. If Messrs. Marston and Nicholson have written their letters in ignorance, I am sorry for them;if for a joke, I shall feel obliged if they will forward at once the railway fare (ten pence) to

HENRY NUTTER

FROGS FOUND IN CLAY

Manchester City News

September 1st 1894

BOOTH-STREET EAST,MANCHESTER

I feel convinced that Mr Marston has,in perfect good faith,simply jumped at his conclusion without examining with care the surroundings of his frogs. I have never met with one such story that stood the test of careful scientific scrutiny. Did he notice the eyes of the frogs? Could they see? It is a proved fact that animals that have lived in total darkness are invariably blind, e.g the blind fishes in the caves of Kentucky. Their very eyes have disappeared,and are replaced by a thick cutaneous covering. The crayfish are also blind. The footstalk on which the eye used to be is there, but the eyes have disappeared. As Darwin puts it, " The stand of the telescope is there, but the lenses are lost." In conversation with Dr Murray not long after the return of the Challenger expedition, I asked him what was the condition of the eyes of marine animals which they dredged up from the profound depths of the sea, where the darkness must have been total. He assured me that "they were invariably non-functional " From all this, the eyes of these frogs should be non-functional too. But were they? Biologists tell us that some animals have "rudimentary organs" that have dwindled away almost to nothing from long-continued inaction. Anyhow, the gizzards of some folks won`t become rudimentary yet awhile, judging from the things they can digest with ease and gusto. How often have we read of toads and frogs found in solid blocks of limestone. Now in order for that to be possible we

must believe that "Froggie" (a land and fresh water amphibian) "would a-wooing go", and for that amiable purpose he swam out on the salt sea, which he detests, and then dived to the bottom, and lay there still while the slow-growing corals enclosed him in their stony embrace or while the slowly accumulating sediment of calcareous microscopic Foraminiferæ gathered round him and buried him; and then, when he was comfortably tucked in all round, he want to sleep while the corals went on growing and the sediment accumulating, hundreds and possibly thousands of feet thick above him. He dormant little Atlas still dreamed on, with this most enormous pressure of superincumbent sediment crushing down continually upon him, without being squashed flat, or seriously disturbed. Many millions of years rolled by, and the sediment and the corals and crinoids were all cemented together by pressure into solid rock. In time this rock, by slow upheavel, was raised from the sea and became dry land, and one day, by the persuasive energy of a dose of dynamite, the persuasive energy of a dose of dynamite, the prison walls were forced open, and the venerable batrachian Rip Van Winkle stepped out, as good as new , after a sleep of probably twenty million years on an empty stomach. No, no! It is too absurd for anyone outside Bedlam to swallow. Faith is far too noble a faculty to be wasted on such nonsense, and I for one shall keep mine for a better purpose, and for verities that have been well tried and proved, and upon which it may rest calmy and without a tremor or a fear.

HENRY WALKER

FROGS IN COAL Manchester City News 8-9-1894

Newspaper readers are so often informed that frogs and toads have been found alive in coal,that, with your kind permission, I should like to point out for the benefit of those who believe it, a few of the hard indigestible facts they have to swallow.

What is this coal in which these interesting reptiles are said to be found? It is simply a mass of dead vegetable matter,such as ferns,and the foliage of ancient forest trees which dropped from the banches and died…Now all this enormous mass of heavy materials has been continually crushing down upon the old spongy vegetation , with an energy compared to which,that of a hydraulic press is simply nothing, until the few feet,or

in some cases,several yards of old vegetation was pressed and squeezed into a few inches,or at most a few feet thick. Is there a single human being who believes a frog or toad could stand a pressure like that and live? If so, that human being must be of a very believing turn of mind, and has more faith than he knows what to do with. Put a frog in a bale of soft cotton under a hydraulic press for a few minutes by way of practice , and if it survives even that mild and brief pressure it may help us to believe it could resist the greater squeeze for millions of years…If these preposterous stories could be proved , what a deathblow it would strike at the doctrine of evolution! We could then say, "Here is a live frog. That we know dates back to many millions of years, and is so exactly like the living frogs of to-day, that we cannot distinguish one from the other. Evidently the frogs of to-day have undergone no change or evolution since the time when reptilian life first appeared on the earth," and no answer could be given to the argument. **HENRY WALKER**

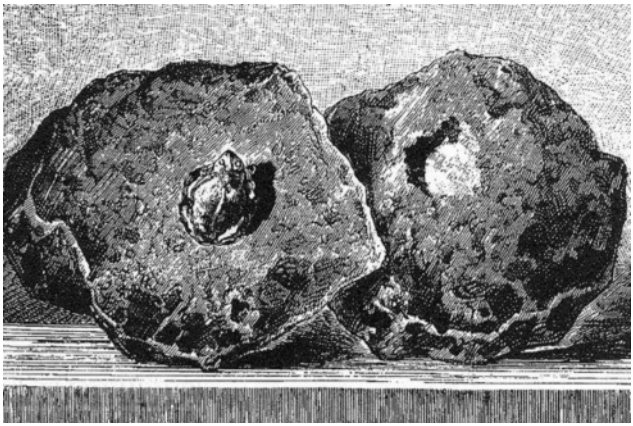

Fig 1 .Toad in hole, known as the Blois case. © forteantimes.com. Reproduced with permission of Fortean Times.

A SHOWER OF FROGS IN CHESHIRE

HALE BARNS, ALTRINCHAM

Manchester City News September 1st 1894

In last weeks *Illustrated London News* several correspondents have sent to Dr. Andrew Wilson newspaper cuttings of accounts of recent showers of frogs near St Helens. Some twenty-six years ago I witnessed a shower of frogs during the heaviest fall of rain I ever saw. The storm occurred on a Sunday afternoon, during service at Hale Chapel, and had not ceased when service concluded, so the congregation had to shelter for a time in the Chapel. Whilst standing at the old school door I was astonished to see a number of small frogs descending with the rain. One youth, to satisfy himself that they really were frogs, ventured into the open yard, returning a minute afterwards with one of these creatures in his hat. When the storm abated there were hundreds of them jumping about in the Chapel yard.

Dr Wilson is sceptical about showers of frogs, and says that " these amphibians are of the earth, earthy, and if they do descend `from the sky` their origin is none the less terrestrial and celestial. The only point at issue, says the Doctor, is this: "Supposing we get clear evidence that the frogs were actually showered down upon the earth, what was the nature of the force or action - whirlwind, tornado, waterspout or other cyclonic agency - which swept them into the air from their native water or earth?" After reminding us that the metamorphosis takes place in water,and that after getting rid of their tails and gills in passing from their tadpole stages, they assume the guise of the adult animal, and leave the water to take to their lung-breathing and terrestrial life, the Doctor further says, " If left to make any suggestions at all regarding the Thatto Heath frog showers, I should be inclined to say that we do not need to suppose the animals came from the sky at all. In other words,failing evidence as to any whirlwind action, and noting the appearance , it seems reasonable to suggest that the rain simply came down upon colonies of these juveniles in the fields, and washed them out into the sight of the townsfolk."

Well, I do not claim scientific knowledge and am not prepared with any evidence as to cyclone, whirlwind , or any other force by which these creatures may have ascended. I can only testify to what I have seen. **JOSEPH MOORE.**

Fig 2. A toad in a hole. © forteantimes.com. Reproduced with permission of Fortean Times.

A LONG-BURIED TOAD

Manchester City News September 14th 1895

A day or two , while the woodmen on Earl Cowper`s estate at Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, were cutting up one of the large oaks which fell during the storm last Lady Day they came across a toad embedded in the heart of the trunk, about eighteen feet from the root. The imprisoned creature which must have subsisted for some years on the sap, was about half the size of a fully developed toad, and readily swallowed the worms,earwigs,and beetles which were given to it.

THE LATEST FROG STORY

Manchester City News November 13th 1895

The resurrection of a frog from its rocky grave has,writes a correspondent, been proved by the borough surveyor of Gateshead. On the 1st inst., In making excavations for a new street in the suburbs, a cutting 9ft deep was made through a bank of rock and clay. At the extreme depth a frog was found embedded, the greyish brown of which was exactly the same as his surrounding, while its shape was moulded in the

hard rocky matter. The borough engineer put the frog in a box along with loose earth similar to that in which it had been found, and it came to life and motion in a few days. Yesterday its bright bead-like eyes were blinking merrily, while it hopped about. The mouth seems closed from want of use, and how the creature has survived, or how long it has been entombed, is a mystery.

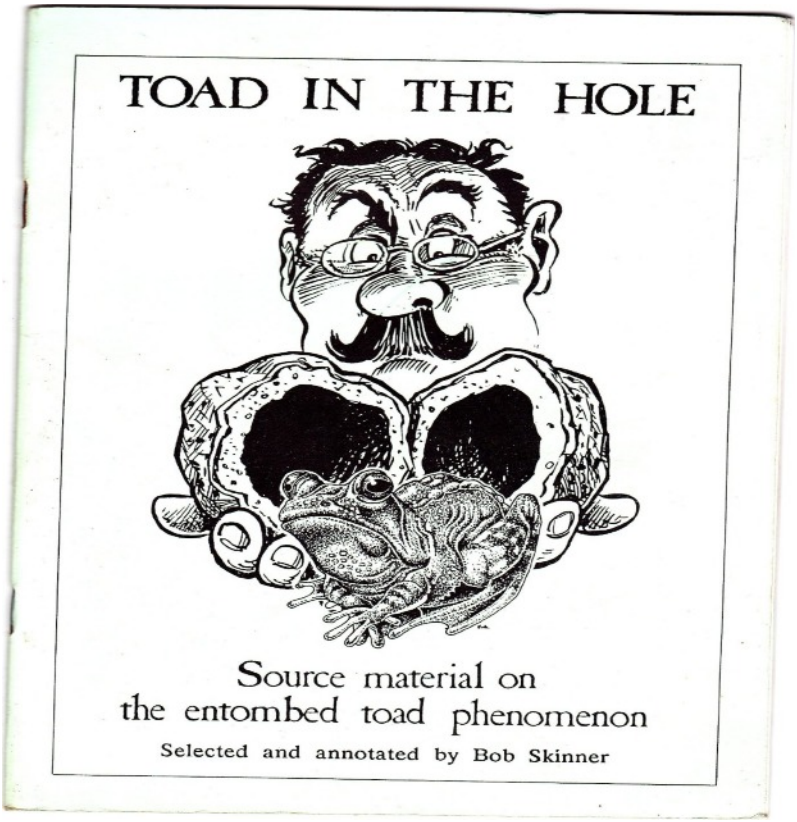

Fig 3. Cover of Bob Skinner`s `Toad in The Hole`. A classic study of the phenomenum.

A "golden crested" eagle and other stories

"GOLDEN CRESTED " EAGLE

Firstly, the "golden crested eagle". This was probably simply the golden eagle mis-named,but I thought it interesting enough to mention here. This is from the Manchester City News of around May 6th 1904:

" It seems that an eagle has been seen recently in the neighbourhood of Astley Moss, near Manchester, and that persons who saw the bird say that it was one of the "golden crested" species. We have not heard of that species before, and it would be interesting to know what the large bird really was. Of course there are such things as golden eagles and also golden crested wrens - to take two extremes in bird life. The "eagle" is reported to have subsequently departed in the direction of the Ship Canal and North Cheshire. It is amusing to notice that an uncommon bird seldom appears without receiving a more or less imposing (though totally incorrect) name from the rural community. It is the same with insects and anything else out of the ordinary way. The country lad, on a summer afternoon, with a captured tiger-moth under his jacket in the grass will invariably tell you he has caught a " king butterfly" or a maybe a " queen butterfly". It is the best name he can think of. Again, a hawk or other large moth disturbed from its noonday slumbers and beating against the window panes, is received with a certain amount of awe and is promptly termed a "buzzer" come to life in a country school-house, and make the excited lads itch to be after it. It would suit them better than droning over books. But the lads are sometimes not very certain whether " buzzers" do not bite!

AN EAGLE IN KENT Teesdale Mercury November 18th 1885

A correspondent, writing from Grove Ferry, gives the following particulars regarding the appearance of an eagle in Kent ; Living in the district visited by this strange bird, and having on two occasions been within 100 yards from him, beside having made about a dozen attempts to either shoot the bird or capture it, I am in a position to give a few interesting facts about the visitor. A sheep has died in a marsh a quarter of a mile from my house. After the owner had taken the skin off, instead of burying the carcass he allowed it to remain on the ground. Some men working

near on Saturday, Oct 17, noticed " something" near the carcass which apparently gave the rooks a great deal of trouble as they were incessantly cawing, fighting , and flying about. The men, however, took no further notice of it (although they saw the same game going) until the following Thursday, when my attention was drawn to the fact by them. Knowing about the carcass, I at once said it was "something" eating the dead sheep, and asked why they had not let me hear about it before.

Fig 1 Golden Eagle.

Wikipedia Creative Commons

They excused themselves by stating that they knew nothing about the carcase. This was most unfortunate, as I had known about it while the bird was feeding, no doubt I might have captured him. As it was, when I went down I crept to within 100 yards, and then it rose and settled upon a gate post a few hundred yards further down the marshes. I assertained that the bones were all that remained of the sheep, and then, through my marine glasses , had a good view of the bird, both upon the gate-post and 20 or 30 times afterwards. Its appearance is as follows: A large bird, when standing apparently as big as a good-sized turkey, with feathered legs, a sort of black crest on its head, and a whiteish fringe round its neck. When standing, its body is the colour of " golden brown" , but when flying the tips of its wings are dark - probably black - while the rest of the wings and body appear still to be golden brown. Under its wings and body when flying its plumage is a sort of grey and somewhat speckled. My impression is that it is either one of the ospreys or a golden

Fig 2

Osprey

Wikipedia Creative Commons

eagle. Its depredations, as far as I can at present ascertain, have amounted to eating the dead sheep, killing and eating two ducks (the mangled remains of which I saw, together with a partridge or two; and once, I was told, he was driven off a sheep`s back (a live "mutton" this time) , where he had settled and flicked out a piece or two of wool. This was told to me by the lad who states he saw it and I have no reason to dispute his veracity. The "eagle" (I will call it one now) stayed hereabouts until Sunday, October 25, when he disappeared about noon but I hear he is still in this part of Kent having turned up at various places as "near Sandwich", "Preston" "between Canterbury and Surrey" and again "between Canterbury and Chilham". I think he will keep at large for some time as he is a "`cute" one I can assure you. I was much disappointed in not securing him I can assure you , but I tried all I could think of with that in view and the second time came very nearly got him.

AN EAGLE IN DERBYSHIRE

Hand written document about an attack by a large eagle in Derbyshire. December 1st 1887

A Golden Eagle Shot in Derbyshire.

"On Saturday afternoon about 3 p.m as Thomas James Hancock gamekeeper to Colonel Fountain was attending to his duties on the sstretch of moorland between Matlock and Derby Dale he perceived a large bird make a dash at his spaniel dog. He raised an alarm , and the bird flew into the air . In a few seconds it again descended and apparently was determined to attack the dog. The keeper whistled the quadruped to his this - the feathered assailant following. When the bird was only a short distance away Hancock fired his gun and broke its wing. He stunned it with a blow from the gun and subsequently killed it. Upon examination the troublesome visitor was found to be a magnificent specimen of the golden eagle. It measures 6ft 8 ½ from tip to tip of its wings and is 3ft 3 in in height. The largest feathers in the wing reach 1ft 11 in. This is the first of the species killed in the locality."

In response to this report someone called V.A. Shaw wrote:

" Following the report on December 1st 1887 regarding the killing of the eagle, many readers wrote in the Derby Mercury severely criticising and condemning the gamekeeper Thomas James Hancock for what they said was wanton and unnecessary destruction of such a magnificent bird and that he could have taken other measures to safeguard himself and his dog and thus not resorted to killing of the eagle.

But I wonder what there attitude and reaction would have been if they had been in Hancock`s place. For it does not take much imagination to think of the gamekeeper walking with his spaniel dog across the bleak and desolate moor in foggy conditions. When suddenly out of the mist appeared this large bird (*intent on attacking the dog, and even when he raised a shout* - words in italics crossed out in the original) which turning towards the spaniel apparently with the intention of attacking it. Hancock would naturally be very surprised and startled on seeing

such a ferocious large bird in attacking position. And perhaps thinking of his own safety as well as the dog , raised a large shout causing the eagle to fly into the air but descended in a few seconds and showed its intention to attack the dog. Having a loaded gun in his hands it would be only natural for Hancock to fire the gun at the eagle to protect himself as well as the dog. It was evident that at such close quarters , on firing Hancock possibly meant only to frighten or wound the eagle, because he could have shot it dead instead of breaking its wing.

A Huge Serpent near Grenoble,France in 1809

I found the following story using the newspapers.com archive. It was published in **The Pittsburgh Gazette** on November 1st 1809, reprinted from a French newspaper:

EXTRAORDINARY ANIMAL

The following account is translated from the French Moniteur of the 9th August. It is dated Grenoble, Aug 1 and contains interesting particulars respecting the passage of an unknown animal , supposed to be a reptile, but of tremendous size, through the commune of Bernin. The account was written by the Mayor of Grenoble:-

" During the night of the 14th July last, the dogs in the village of Bernin were heard to bark in an extraordinary manner. Those of the lower part of the common began, and successively those belonging to the houses on the upper part betrayed the same sign of anxiety, at more than half a mile distance. The next morning the trace of an enormous animal, of which no one could form a just idea, was observed and lead to supposition of its being of the serpent kind. It seemed to have issued from the banks of the Iser, and directed its course towards the mountains, crossing a space of two miles in extent, along which its path was plainly visible through the meadows, corn and hemp fields ploughed grounds, and even the public roads. It slightly waved its movements that from 12 to 16 inches in breadth - At its arrival in the neighbourhood of the first village, it met with a hedge of dead wood, and chose, at a middle height; the pace where the branches were least entangled to effect its passage. It serrated (?) every thorn as completely as if …intentionally destroyed. At a short distance from this spot, it seemed to have rested itself under a tree, as a circular space seven feet and a half feet in diameter was observed, where the ground had sunk a little under its weight. On resuming its course, it altered its direction,which,however, still pointed to the heights. On reaching the public road it was compelled to pass through a quick hedge, three branches of which were found broken. It`s pace was perfectly visible in the middle of the road, and on its sides.

It proceeded as far as the most elevated part of the common, where its track was suddenly lost in a torrent. Till then it had followed the unequalities of the ground, and in the corn and hemp fields which it had crossed, the blades were found completely crushed, without any trampling on the left or on the right, which might have induced a belief that men had occasioned that devastation. According to the width of its path; which gives pretty accurately the diameter of its size, the animal must be upwards of three feet in circumference. It has not been seen by any person, but its trace has been observed again on the common of Crolles, from which it may be thought that it has once more descended towards the river."

An Account of a Unicorn in Tibet in 1821

The Calcutta Annual Register 1821

The Rhinocerous has long been considered the Unicorn of the Bible, and was supposed to possess all the properties ascribed to that animal,rage,untameableness, great swiftness and immense strength. But the Rhinocerous bears no similarity whatever to the drawings which we are acustomed to see of the Unicorn, and has the single coincidence of one horn.

Major LATTER, who commands the Rungpore Battalion, has lately had an opportunity of correcting the error into which Naturalists have fallen, by ascertaining that the Unicorn actually exists in the interior of Thibet, and is well known to the inhabitants. This extraordinary fact was first communicated to Colonel Nicol in February 1820."In a Thibetian manuscript, says Major Latter,containing the names of different animals, which I procured the other day from the hills, the Unicorn is classed under the head of those whose hoofs are divided; it is called the one horned *Tsopo*.Upon enquiring what kind of an animal it was, to our astonishment the person who brought me the manuscript, described exactly the Unicorn of the ancients. It is a native of the interior of Thibet, about the size of a Tattoo, fierce and extremely wild, seldom if ever caught alive, but frequently shot and the flesh is used for food." The person who gave me this information has repeatedly seen the animals, and eaten the flesh of them

They go together in herds like our wild buffaloes and are very frequently to be met with on the borders of the great desert, about a month`s journey from Lhassa, in that part of the country inhabited by the wandering Tartars. Upon the person being asked if he could draw the figure of one, he did so upon paper,and considering the roughness of the execution, produced a striking similitude of the Unicorn.

I believe in the Encyclopaedia that the Unicorn is supposed to be the *Oryx*, or Indian Ass of Aristotle, who says it has but one horn and also to be the *Fera Monoceros* of PLINY both of which came from India. PLINY in his account describes the great *black* horn and hog-like tail. My informant who has repeatedly seen the animal described the tail to be like that of a Hog

Fig 1. Unicorn in History of Four Footed-Beasts and Serpents by Topsell. 1658. Wikipedia Creative Commons

or rather of an Ass,and different from that of Horse. It must be remembered that this man knew nothing about our Unicorn, but merely gave the description of an animal he himself had seen and was well acquainted. SPARMANN mentions that the unicorn described by the ancients has been found delineated on the plain surface of a rock in Caffraria, and several people at the Cape told me the same. Is it not possible that the Wild Ass and Unicorn in the Book of Job are one and the same? If so, the description given in the 39th chapter of JOB would commence at the 5th verse,and end at the 12th. Moses in blessing Joseph, says, His glory is like the firstling of his bullock and his horns are like the horns of Unicorns, with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth. BALAAM when speaking in his parable of Jacob and Israel says- God brought him forth out of Egypt;he hath as it were the strength of a Unicorn he shall cut up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones and pierce them through his arrows. DAVID also says`Thou hast heard me from the horns of the Unicorn, as having been delivered from great danger.

I know that BRUCE endeavoured to shew that the Unicorn or Reem of the Scriptures , was the Rhinoceros, but the Unicorn of Thibet as described to me, answers exactly to the account we have of the animal in the Sacred Writings. ISAIAH says `And the Unicorns shall come down with them, and the Bullocks with the Bulls, and their land shall be soaked with blood,and their dust made fat with fatness`. I have given these quotations to show that Unicorns are spoken of in Scriptures as *herding together,* which they actually do, for the man of himself particularly mentioned that they went in herds, and kept together like our wild Buffaloes. The Rhinoceros on the contrary is a solitary animal. In the Thibet manuscript the Rhinoceros is called *Se, ron*,and classed with the Elephant & c. The Unicorn cannot be mistaken for the wild horse (well known in Thibet) which is called by a different name, and expressly mentioned under the head of animals that have not the hoof divided, whereas the Unicorn *has* the hoof divided.

I have written to the Sachia Lama requesting him to procure me a perfect skin of the animal,with the head,horn and hoofs,but it will take a long time before I can get them down as the *Tsopo* is not to be met with nearer than a month`s journey from Lhassa. This interesting communication was transmitted by the MARQUIS OF HASTINGS to SIR JOSEPH BANKES,and a few extracts from it have been published in the English Papers.A few days ago MAJOR LATTER arrived at Calcutta from Rungpore,and has kindly favoured us with some further particulars relating to the curious animal in

question. “ I find on reference in the Hebrew Bible that two different words are used in the book of JOB, for the Unicorn and Wild Ass, and consequently the description given in the 29th chapter, from the 5th to 12th Verses, refers to two different animals according to the English Version, and though the Unicorn and Wild Ass may have similar habits,and be found in the same part of the country. There are several collateral circumstances which tend to establish the fact of the Unicorn being found in Thibet. Captain TURNER, in his Embassy to Tishoo Lombo mentions that the Bootan Rajah told him he had one alive at a short distance from Tassisadon. BELL in his travels from Moscow to Pekin with the Russian Embassy, describes a stray Unicorn having been found near a place on the southern frontiers of Siberia. Two Roman Catholic Missionaries who travelled overland from China to Europe, through Nepaul,mention that the Monosaurus was amongst the number of wild animals in that part of the desert where they passed the great wall of China.” Major LATTER has obtained the horn of a young Unicorn from the Sachia Lamia,

Fig 2 . Tibet in 1892.

Wikipedia Creative Commons

which is now before us. It is twenty inches in length, at the root it is four inches and a half in circumference and tapers to a point, it is black,rather flat at the sides, and has fifteen rings, but they are only prominent on one side. It is nearly straight. Major LATTER expects to obtain the head of the animal,the hoof and the skin, very shortly, which afford positive proof of the form and character of the *Tsopo* or Thibet Unicorn - *Govt Gazette.*

Carl`s Cryptozoological Octipodes and other Fortean Cephalopods

Carl P.Marshall

Introduction
The article below focuses on various species of octopi. Several encounters of note are based on fact with corroborative evidence e.g. film footage and scientific peer reviewed journals. While others are cryptozoologically based with evolutionary theories applied to question the link.

Murderous Pacific Octopus
In September 1984 two spear fishermen from the Pacific island nation of Kiribati, were reportedly killed when several large octopi dragged them from their boats and held them underwater ultimately drowning them. The atypical attack took place in a lagoon on the island of Tarawa and was announced to the rest of the world by Kiribati's National Resources Minister. It is unclear how many octopi or what species took part in the attack.

Belize's Giant Lake Octopus
In 2010 it was brought to my attention of a very large octopus that allegedly frequented a tropical lake on the outskirts of Altun ha Mayan archaeological site, Belize. We had informed many locals of our presence in this area primarily looking for snakes and requested for any information on encounters, and it wasn't long before a local man came to us with a resplendent parrot snake *Leptophis ahaetulla* that he had found close to the site.The man obviously felt the reptile was dangerous and after convincing him it was harmless he agreed to come with us to the lake to release the creature away from habitation, and it was here he told the party of the giant red octopus with a possible arm span up to 15 feet long (approx 4.5 metres) residing in the waters. According to our source the lake is connected to the sea by a system of underground caves and therefore brackish (saline) and that the illusive octopus travels back

and forth from the open sea to Altun ha lake. All known cephalopods (squid, octopus, cuttlefish and nautiluses) are specific to salt water environments due to their basic physiology and it seems likely that there have never been any freshwater ancestral types. Dr Mark Norman, cephalopod expert and head of science at the Museum Victoria Says

" *While we can't be 100 per cent certain, its unlikely that there have ever been freshwater cephalopods... It is probable that they never developed a sodium pump that would help them cope with osmotic change in fresh water."*

Freshwater dwellers have high salt levels in their blood relative to the water around them. Without a method of controlling it, osmosis would equate salt concentrations between the animal and the surrounding water, pumping salt out of the body and flushing it with freshwater; however a sodium pump, like that found in freshwater species, uses chloride cells on the gill surface to absorb sodium and potassium ions from the environment. Any excess water taken in at the same time is excreted as urine. In contrast marine dwellers have the opposite problem, and have to conserve fresh water while expelling salt. Cephalopods pump seawater through their gills and use their kidneys to filter out fresh water from the ocean.

So I hypothesize, could there be highly illusive cephalopod species that have developed a radical evolutionary adaptation to deal with osmosis? Based on evolutionary theory and given the assumed information of the aforementioned cephalopod it poses many questions yet to be answered.

The Oklahoma Octopi

Is assumed to be an undiscovered species of octopus lurking in the dark depths of Oklahoma's otherwise tranquil lakes surviving under similar conditions as Belize's giant lake octopus.
However unlikely this may seem this is exactly what is being claimed after a spate of drowning deaths in Lake Thunderbird, Lake Tenkiller and Lake Oolagah in Oklahoma. Some argue that a large catfish would be more likely to be responsible for the recent mysterious deaths, this is yet to be validated.

Giant British Octopus
On January 12, 1952, Constable John Morrison was walking along the waterfront near Broadford, Isle of Skye, Scotland when he witnessed a strange cephalopod lying half submerged in shallow water. As he thought it was dead Morrison decided to give the strange creature a tap with his boot to which it gripped him by the left ankle with a six ft tentacle. It was then dispatched with rocks and garden shears. The dead animal was then later identified as a red flying squid *Ommastrephes bartramii* - an apparent visitor to British waters.
However the common octopus *Octopus vulgaris* has an average radial size of 1.0 - 2.0 feet (approx 30-60 cm) but outsized specimens with a radial spread of over 6.0 feet (approx 1.8 metres) have been recorded in British waters.

Giant Mediterranean Octopus
An octopus with tentacles longer than 10 feet (approx 3.5 metres) has been reported in the Mediterranean sea off France and Greece and an additional octopus with tentacles 13 feet long (approx 3.9 metres) was reported in 1912 off Toulon, France. In the 1950's a diver encountered a huge octopus either in the Gulf of Corinth off the Piraieus or in the Angean sea.

Giant Pacific Octopus
In 1928, when stationed at Pearl Harbor, Robert Todd Aiken discovered a group of six large octopi off the shore of Oahu that he claimed were 40 feet (approx 12 metres) from tip to tip. In 1950 off the Kona coast, Hawaii, fisherman Val Ako saw a monstrous octopus with tentacles 75 feet long (approx 22 metres) with suckers the size of car tyres resting underwater on a reef. His family adviser later informed him that the octopus came to the island every year for a month with a female.
Paul the Octopus
Was a common octopus *Octopus vulgaris* who came to worldwide attention when he successfully predicted the results of the 2010 World cup. During a divination Paul was presented with two boxes both containing food and both marked with the flag of a football team in an upcoming match. He picked out the box with the flag of the winning team in several of Germany's six Euro 2008 matches and all seven of their matches in the 2010 World Cup. His success rate reached 85%, with 11 out of 13 matches correctly predicted when he sadly died in October 2010.

Recorded Cephalopodean anomalies

1 Tool use: Some octopi have been shown to use tools. At least four specimens of veined octopus *Amphioctopus marginatus* have been witnessed retrieving discarded coconut shells, manipulating them, and then reassembling them as a shelter. This discovery was documented in the journal *Current Biology* and has been documented on film.

2 Bipediallity: Among the mimic octopus's many talents it has now been proven that this species can walk and run on the seabed in a manner that can best be described as semi bipedal which can be viewed on *Youtube*.

3 Flying Cephalopods: Japanese scientists have recently proved claims that squid can fly (or glide) this also has been documented on film.

The Kraken In Norse mythology the Kraken is a hyper-giant squid with a body over a mile in circumference. It appears like groups of small islands surrounded by seaweed when witnessed in either the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. It is allegedly dark brown with light coloured speckles and has a high broad 'forehead', large eyes and a pointed snout which is actually the creatures tail. Its arms or tentacles are supposed to be as big as a medium sized ships. Also it allegedly causes fishes to come closer to the surface when it rises and creates a huge wake or disturbance in the water when it submerges. It is said to attack ships by grasping their rigging with its powerful arms.

In 1801, Pierre Denys de Montfort noted that in the chapel of St Thomas at St Malo in Brittany, France there was a piece of artwork depicting a huge squid or octopus attacking a ship by winding its tentacles around the masts and rigging.

An American, Captain Reynolds described a detached squid tentacle that was 45 feet long (approx 13 metres) and 2ft 6in (76.2 cm) in diameter.

Dr Bernard Heuvelmans, the 'Father of Cryptozoology', cited the great length of squid tentacles found in certain whale stomachs, as well as noting a consistent ratio between sucker size and tentacle length as evidence of larger cryptic specimens.

Conclusion

Octopi have been the centre of attention in mythology and films e.g. the Kraken widely accepted to be the giant squid *Architeuthis sp.* for many decades. With the unique links noted in the above article it reinforces the undisputed correlation between octopi, myth and cryptozoology.

Illustrations. Maureen Ashfield and Emma Cole

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Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3 Altun ha lake Belize

Two Enigmatic Birds in the *Xenia* of Martial

Richard George

Marcus Valerius Martialis (40- 103/ 4 A.D.) , a Roman of Spanish extraction, is the best-known epigrammatist of antiquity (and the subject of my doctorate in an earlier century!) . The second collection he published, *Xenia*, confusingly referred to by classical scholars as " Martial Book 13", consists of more than 120 two-line " mottoes" describing gifts to dinner guests at the Roman end of year revelry, the Saturnalia. Of interest to natural historians are *Xenia* 68 and 69 , as both describe a species of bird which Romans considered edible - a very broad category indeed! - And whose identification is far from obvious.

Here are the texts:

68 Galbuli

Gabina decipitur calamis et retibus ales,

Turget adhuc viridi cum rudis uva mero.

68 Yellow birds

The yellow bird with cane and net`s deceived,

When young grapes swell with wine still raw and green.

69 *Catta* birds

Umbria never gave us Pannonian *cattae,*

Pudens prefers to offer them to his catamite.

The subject of 68, the galbina or " yellow bird", certainly bewilders Martial`s editor D.R. Shackleton Bailey: " The identity of the bird, here called yellow, is very obscure. It…has been variously identified with the golden oriole, the green finch, the stone curlew and the green

woodpecker" (1). Golden oriole is a good call, but one I shall, for reasons which will become clear, put on one side. Stone curlew is not, as only its legs and beak are yellow. Green can dovetail into greenish-yellow, but the greenfinch and green woodpecker are much less yellow than the yellowhammer, great tit and blue tit. Professor Shackleton Bailey is a highly distinguished scholar, but a natural historian he ain`t - any more than Lewis and Short, the great Latin lexicographers, who implausibly suggest a " yellow thrush" (2).

But in the text of the poem lies a clue. The *galbina* is caught " when young grapes swell with wine still raw and green" - in other words, at a *specific time of year*. This suggests to me four possible species, of which two are closely related.

The yellow wagtail, *Motacilla flava* ,is in Italy a summer visitor. And it`s strikingly coloured, as I discovered when I saw one near Llangollen at the end of May about twenty years ago.

Equally yellow is the black-headed bunting, *Emberiza melanocephala,* often kept as a cage bird. This is a summer visitor to the southern half of Italy only, but its habitat is described as "Scrub,olive groves, vineyards, gardens" (3), which may have led to the association with wine-making in poem 68. The other candidates are two yellowish warblers, the Melodious (*Hippolais polyglotta)* and the Icterine *(Hippolais icterina),* which even twitchers equipped with telescopes have difficulty distinguishing except by song. In Italy the melodious warbler is a summer visitor; the icterine a spring or autumn passage migrant.

I am, of course, making two assumptions here: that the migratory habits of these birds were the same when Martial wrote these poems as they are today, and that the Romans classified birds with anything like our accuracy. But of our contenders the yellow wagtail, being a commoner bird, comes first, the black-headed bunting second.

The other poem is where I return to the golden oriole *(Oriolus oriolus)*.Lewis and Short, this time usefully, refer us from *catta* to the German words Kater and Katze, "cat" , via archaic Germanic languages (4) .According to my Collins identification guide, the golden oriole is known to make " a cat-like squalling cry"…(5).

Fig 1

Western Yellow Wagtail

Wikipedia Creative Commons. Andreas Trepte.

www.photo-natur.de

And as one of Europe`s most beautiful birds, the male would make an appropriate gift to a boy-slave from a besotted male admirer like Pudens. The image of it being guzzled and then re-gurgitated, however, is difficult to take!

R E F E R E N C E S

1 *Martial: Epigrams*, ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library (1993), III.200f.

2 Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary,* (1984 edition) , p.800.

3 Heinzel, Fitter,Parslow, *The Collins Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (1998 edition) , p. 356

4 Lewis and Short, op cit., p. 302.

5. Heinzel, Fitter, Parslow, op cit p. 328.

Fig 2 Golden Oriole. Wikipedia Creative Commons

Saetón , the dragon of Sierra Morena,Spain

Javier Resines

"*With Saetón is only basket and grub hoe* ". With such assurance an old saying refers to one of the most enigmatic animals that are part of the Spanish cryptozoological fauna. I am referring to Saetón , a species of snake described by many witnesses as a huge creature (capable of reaching over two meters in length) , very thick, long tail , with small appendages at the ends of her body, greenish or blackish and possessed of a very rounded head. We are facing a very aggressive, highly poisonous being that also has the ability to fly and hypnotize her victims.

Although , to be honest, it is a creature that lies outside the official books of zoology and to which herpetologists tend to smile when asked about its possible real existence. In any case , her eyes vertical pupils , bloated guts , and the strength and violence of her tail as a whip when used, make the being very threatening.

This Saetón has taken part in numerous cases of attack for hundreds of years. From about the time of Muslim rule stories began circulating about this reptile , especially in border and front line areas between local inhabitants and African invaders.

Indeed, it has even been asserted that Saetón could have been introduced to the area at some point in history by the Almohad armies, which accompanied them almost as a pet. Perhaps the Peninsula brought some unknown subtropical species into these parts and imagination did the rest?
In any case, from the late twelfth century there are numerous testimonies given as to the presence of foreign reptiles and monsters of all types in areas reconquered by the Spaniards , like *hairy snakes* confused with mongoose , an animal supposedly added to our habitat,also by Muslims.
If you stick to the many places where it has been seen, Saetón extended their habitat over much of Andalusia and Extremadura and also in

the slopes of the Sierra Morena Mancha. In some districts of Ciudad Real - lying north of this mountain - called usual see *Saiton* and in the oak forests of the area. Curious circumstance occurs that saetón is not the only snake that seems to inhabit these characteristics in Spain. In the Sierra de Segura, in Albacete province , there is testimony of another flying snake that locals call *alicántara* . Several witnesses claim to have met her on trips around the place, mainly up to the Seventies of the Twentieth century. The same name is given to some strange snakes seen in the province of Jaén . Surely , though under different names , we are talking about the same one.

Saetón , Saiton or alicántara , the reality is that cattle are their favorite victims , but sometimes stables and their occupants are also attacked, they would also bite them in the neck and head and even hurt with its powerful tail . This area of the head is preferred for their attacks on humans due to the height that is as feature - as - they often hide among the branches of trees hanging over, waiting for their next victim . The bodies of sheep and other farm animals appear swollen after a lethal move , probably due to the effect of a poison that inoculates their poor victims.

Fig 1 Map of Sierra Morena

Encounters at the borders of the incredible.

The Andalusian researcher Charles Chevallier Marina has spent years researching in the field every possible clue as to the existence of such an unusual animal. Thanks to his work we know lots of data to be elusive and a number of stories and encounters with our protagonist, stories that

Fig 2. Chrysopelea of S.Asia.

originate not far from the Andalucian mountains. At the height of the bridge of La Perilla, near the headwaters of the River Yegüas, Seatón was run over by a large wooden wagon driven by Grandpa. It was of a monstrous, fearsome appearance. Just before it was crushed against the wagon, it slammed its tail against the spokes of the wheel in a final gesture of fierceness. Fortunately no body was hurt.

In the fifties , Miguel Fuentes- a country shepherd at Andújar , Jaén , had the misfortune to run into one of these beings . The Saetón attacked one of the goats he kept in a creek near the river Jándula . The flying animal disappeared while the goat writhed and swelled to death. You read that right : flying !

In 1973 the surveyor Antonio Reyes was mapping the region of Cazalla and also saw the Saetón . Despite the initial mistrust of these stories of the locals, he had to give in to what his own eyes showed him . Suddenly one morning, and according to their measuring devices ,there appeared flying over a meter high a strange snake 1.40 meters long , approximately. It had a huge head and large eyes and inflated guts. Saetón was undoubtedly the small flying dragon .

Despite the initial disbelief, and taking into account the number of testimonies, herpetologists yield to the possibility of the existence of this anomalous reptile in our land. What at first seem no more than legends of country people, acquires credibility when so many testimonies of honest people accumulate. Also, the stories are coincidental with each other as to the description of the creature , despite the great distances between places where it was last seen and the absence of contact between witnesses.

It could be a related species, a known skink (which share those little appendages and elongated shape, which gives them the look of a snake , although they aren`t) or could take the least risky and common explanation , where we are talking about simple errors of perception by witnesses of familiar species.

So , viper and snakes deformities would cause such a stir though , after hearing some of these witnesses this would not take away the logic about what they have experienced . The local people are the main ones who know the fields and mountains that surround , but science is science.

Another question : could it be extinct ?

The most recent cases of encounters with the Saetón are placed in a time slot that has lasted since the late forties to the mid- eighties of the last century or so. Interestingly, in those years there began widespread use of chemical pesticides in farm work . Indeed, some experts believe that this practice could mean the beginning of the end of Saetón .

The species , if it ever existed, seems to have disappeared .For over thirty years there have been no reliable sightings. Again, this is reliable , because Saetón seems to be a very intimate part of the Andalusian countryside and - occasionally - someone thinks he saw one crossing before their eyes in a slot it has occupied since the late forties to the mid- eighties of the last century or so. Some people think they have accidentally run over one with their car in some dark and lonely side road .

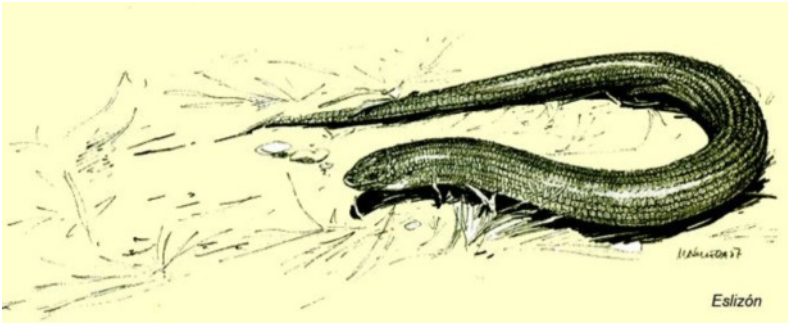


Fig 3 Skink.

This lack of contemporary evidence leads us to consider the possibility of an unknown reptile species that survived in southern Spain until a few decades ago. Too bad that the absence of a specimen found alive or dead has deprived us of a better understanding of this fantastic flying creature .Or maybe , at any time and in any Southern highlands the flying Saetón appears again to silence the voices of those who doubt its existence ...

Fig 4. Representation of an attack by Saeton.

Fig 5. Vibora hocicuda

Drawing of Saetón on back cover.

E-mail to Flying Snake

Dear Richard,

After the recent reports of the Bristol Crocodile, and the subsequent publicity and hoo-ha in the press, the Bristol Post published a piece last week, containing a number of strange and odd local animal tales. Given your recent mention of reports of giant spiders and webs [see FS] ,I thought you might be interested in one story reported in the article:

A GIANT BRISTOL SPIDER

THE GIANT SPIDER OF BALDWIN STREET

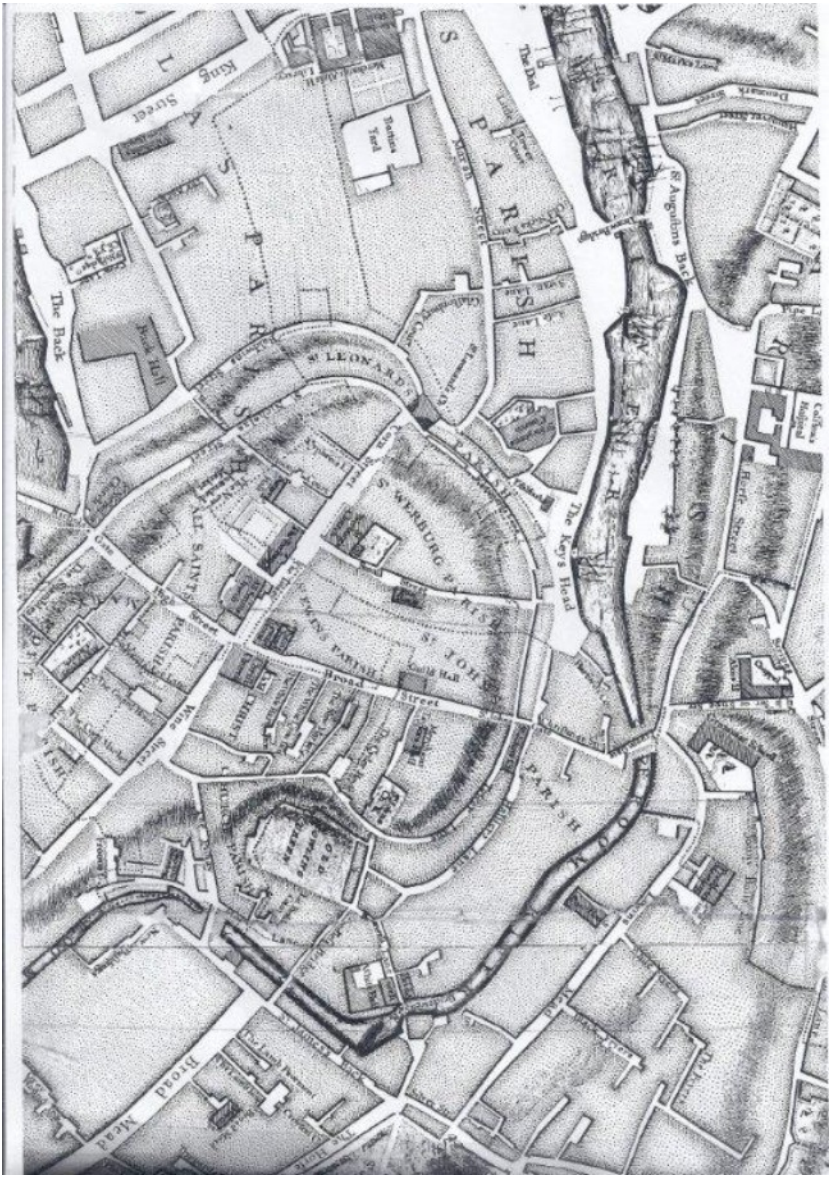
Precisely 300 years ago this August, all Bristol was agog at a tale far more sensational and terrifying than any mere crocodile. In August 1714 Queen Anne died and was succeeded by King George I , the first of the new Hanoverian dynasty. While we might think of the 18th century as genteel and refined (among the gentry anyway), it was nothing of the kind. Political rivalry between the Whigs and Tories could be violent and savage. Some historians will tell you the country spent the entire century in a state of incipient civil war which occasionally erupted into actual war in the Jacobite Rebellions.

These political divisions were, if anything, even more bitter in Bristol than in most other places. The arrival of a German family - the Hanoverian dynasty - on the throne was a cause of celebration for Whigs, but not for Tories. In Bristol, there was a discovery, which, according to accounts from the time,

made people of a superstitious nature very, very apprehensive. The appearance of an immense cobweb. A cooper living in Baldwin Street had invited friends over for an afternoon, proposing that they sit in the summerhouse in his garden (they had gardens even in central Bristol back then, often big ones.) This summerhouse had been, according to local legend, a meeting place for Bristolians taking part in the Rye House Plot (to overthrow King Charles II) 31 years previously.

As the cooper and his party entered the pavilion they found an enormous black cobweb, 34ft wide. He swore that it had been swept clean just a few days previously, and many people saw it as a terrible omen of doom connected with King and regime. The house swamped by sightseers and the cobweb was soon destroyed by souvenir-hunters grabbing pieces of it.

But what of the spider that could make a 34ft web? There was never any sighting of it. You might not expect any reports though; anyone who had seen it would have died of fright.



MAP OF BRISTOL STREETS IN 1742 BY JOHN ROCQUE

Reproduced with permission of Bristol Reference Library

Notes and Queries

GIANT TADPOLE

Page 8A NEWS-HERALD, Panama City, Fla., Friday, April 9, 1976

GIANT TADPOLE — Eric Ryder, 12, displays a whopper of a tadpole he caught near Court Martial Ranch off state road 77 north of Panama City. The tadpole was about nine inches long. A sudden rise in water enrichment is believed responsible for the phenomenon.

According to a member of the Cryptozoology Facebook group this is actually a tadpole of a frog that is well known to science. But it looked pretty large to me! Remarkably, the boy in this photo looks about 9 or 10 and I was 9 in 1976 when this newspaper story appeared. I used to collect tadpoles in Hong Kong in the 1970s but none as big as this!

PYGMY HORSES IN INDIA

Curious small Horses in India

Southey`s Common Place Book vol.2 (1849) p.649.

"In the nabob`s stable at Cossimbazar[1] was a collection of curious small horses, several not exceeding three feet in height; and one a most extraordinary dwarf, under that size, had the head,chest, and body of a full grown horse." - Cruso in Forbes, vol. 4, p.96.

DO MICE AND SPIDERS LIKE MUSIC ?

Sir John Hawkins`s History of Music vol 3 p.117 : - from the " Histoire de la Musique, et de ses Effets."

MONSIEUR DE —— , captain of the regiment of Navarre, was confined six months in prison for having spoken too freely to Monsieur de Louvois, he begged leave of the governor to grant him permission to send for his lute to soften his confinement. He was greatly astonished after four days to see at the time of his playing the mice come out of their holes, and the spiders descend from their webs, who came and formed a circle around him to hear him with attention. This at first so much surprised him, that he stood still without motion, when having ceased to play, all those insects retired quietly into their lodgings: such an assembly made the officer fall into reflections upon what the ancients have told us of Orpheus, Arion, and Amphion. He assured me that he remained six days without playing, having with difficulty recovered from his astonishment, not to mention a natural aversion he had for these sort of insects; nevertheless he began afresh to give a concert to these animals, who seemed to come every day in greater numbers, as if they had invited others, so that in process of time he found a hundred of them about him. In order to rid himself of them, he desired one of the jailors to give him a cat, which he shut up sometimes in a cage when he chose to have this company, and let her loose when he had a mind to dismiss them,

[1] Cossimbazar is a town in West Bengal.

making it thus a kind of comedy that alleviated his imprisonment. I long doubted the truth of this story, but it was confirmed to me six months ago by M.P.—— , intendent of the Duchess of V — , a man of merit and probity, who played upon several instruments to the utmost excellence. He told me that being at —— , he went up into his chamber to refresh himself after a walk, and took up a violin to amuse himself till supper-time, setting a light upon the table before him; he had not played a quarter of an hour before he saw several spiders descend from the ceiling, who came and ranged themselves round about the table to hear him play, at which he was greatly surprised, but this did not interrupt him, being willing to see the end of so singular an occurrence. They remained upon the table very attentively until somebody came to tell him supper was ready, when having ceased to play, he told me these insects remounted to their webs, to which he would suffer no injury to be done. It was a diversion with which he often entertained himself out of curiosity."

RECENT SIGHTINGS OF WALLABIES IN THE PEAKS?

I spoke to a man in a pub in Macclesfield in early April 2014 who told me he had seen 4 wallabies in January 2014 in the Peak District. I thought the last had become extinct in 2011 or 2012.

Wallaby in Leek library © Richard Muirhead

CAT TRYING TO ACT LIKE YOUR EDITOR

BUT MANY YEARS BEFORE DEVO INVENTED "THE POOT"[1]

CAT DANCES WHENEVER IT HEARS MUSIC

Maine claims two of the most distinguished cats in New England. One is Prince, a year old feline belonging to Mrs Rowe of Lewiston. Prince dances whenever he hears music, no matter what kind of music it is[2]. He can waltz better than a trick dog and seems to like it. The other cat is Tom, the only companion of Capt Wall, who remained alone on the derelict schooner Holliswood until rescued . Tom has just arrived in Hallowell from Galveston to spend the rest of his days at the captain`s home there.

FARMER FIGHTS WOLF

EXCITING ENCOUNTER IN WELSH MOUNTAINS

Welsh newspaper - May 16th 1916

The sheep and lambs grazing on the slopes of Snowdonia have recently been harassed by foxes to such an extent that local farmers seldom go out without being armed. A Cwm, Penmachno farmer, whilst inspecting his stock, detected a large animal lurking behind some boulders and its presence creating panic amongst the flock. After some manouvering, the farmer fired at the animal and wounded it so badly that it lurched in the direction of a narrow gorge , where it stood at bay.As the man approached the animal sprang at him, but fell short of its mark,and was shot dead. On examining it the farmer became convinced that it was a wolf of large size, and other persons who have viewed the carcass share his

[1] The Poot is a dance I will attempt to do tonight in Macclesfield at one of my usual disco venues. See the video to Devo`s Jocko Homo.

[2] But could Prince dance the Poot? No,not *that* Prince, he`s too busy dancing to 1999, I mean the cat, dummy!

opinion. A number of local farmers have searched the adjoining mountains, but found no traces of any other wolves, so it is thought possible that the animal escaped from a travelling menagerie and took to the mountains, where it grew fat on mutton and lamb.

GIANT FROG EATS CHICKEN

Cincinnati Daily Press August 17th 1860

A LARGE FROG - A frog was killed in Center Croton, Mass, a short time since, while attempting to swallow a chicken three weeks old. The frog measured nineteen inches in length. What a breakfast half a dozen such fellows would make.

TOWNS TERRORIZED BY ESCAPED LION

People of Keyser and Piedmont, W.Va., Menaced by Roaming Beast.

Washington Times December 21st 1914

Cumberland, Md, Dec 21 - Continued depradations by a huge animal, supposed to be an escaped African lion which has made its home in the mountains, has so terrorized people living in the territory about Keyser and Piedmont , W.V. a that everyone in a radius of miles of those places today is going about heavily armed. Brakemen and conductors on the Western Maryland railroad dare not leave their trains without a rifle for fear of being attacked by the animal. As the hours go by and the apprehension of the beast falls, the stories of its deeds become more fanciful and terrifying.

Some Think It Is A Panther

Older residents and hunters of the region are of the opinion that the beast is a panther which has been driven from its home in a mountain fastness by recent forest fires. But the rumor persists that the animal is a huge African lion, which escaped from a circus in Piedmont last summer. It is said that when the animal escaped the managers of the circus decided to keep the matter a secret, fearing that it might cause them trouble. Today another cow was found mangled near the railroad tracks at Keyser. The "lion" was seen in the vicinity by farmers last night.

Large Hog Slain

Besides cows, calves, and other animals, the beast has slain a large hog. It got into the slaughter house of Roy Amick, only a short distance from Piedmont, and was standing over the carcass of a 400-pound hog, which had dragged several hundred yards, when J.W. Umstott and his son Bixwell, of Keyser, came upon the scene. The animal stood defiant, and the men left. When they returned the animal was gone. An investigation showed that a fence surrounding a lot in the vicinity of the slaughter house had been torn down and that the ground in the vicinity was covered with the blood for a distance of 200 feet. A hunt was started, but was abandoned when the dogs used in tracking it returned to the hunting party bleeding and badly injured.

PLAGUE OF FLIES IN LINCOLNSHIRE, 1699

Mus Thoresby p.15

1699. In May, at Kerton in Lincolnshire, the sky seemed to darken northwestward at a little distance from the town, as though it had been with a shower of hailstones or snow: but when it came near the town it appeared to be to be a prodigious swarm of flies, which went with such a force toward the south-east, that persons were forced to turn their backs of them. One of these flies was sent to Thoresby.

NO PLACE FOR AN OCTOPUS

Examiner (Launceston, Tasmania) December 30th 1954, page 15.

New York (A.A.P.) Residents of the small town of Grafon, in West Virginia, 260 miles inland wondered yesterday how an octopus three feet in diameter got into a small stream there.

The octopus, which had two-foot tentacles, was found yesterday by four boys, playing along the bank of the stream. They killed it and took it to the county dogcatcher.

LEPERS CURED BY EATING TURTLES

HERRERA, 1.3.9. 1498

Lepers from Portugal went to one of the Cape de Verds, to be cured by eating turtles and washing themselves in their blood. By Herrera`s expression `where all the lepers of Portugal went` it may be suspected that this transportation was compulsory. There were no sound inhabitants on this island except six or seven men whose business it was to kill the goats and prepare the skins to be sent to Portugal, which were sometimes so many as in one year to be worth two thousand ducats. Eight goats had been left upon the island, and had multiplied there prodigiously. -

OLD OPINION ABOUT THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

Dundee Courier February 26th 1936 page 7

What is believed to be a squid has been washed ashore on Loch nan Uamh, Inverness-shire. It is about six feet in length, and has long tentacles. People in the locality are of the opinion that the " Loch Ness Monster" is simply a larger specimen of this type. Several different varieties of squid have been washed up on the North East Coast in recent years.

SEA MONSTER OFF CORNWALL

1786

UNIVERSAL REGISTER

SEA MONSTER.

The following comes authenticated from a Gentleman of Moreshian in Cornwall.

A juſt and particular deſcription of a very curious and moſt ſurpriſing ſea monſter driven on ſhore in Portleaven Bay on the coaſt of Cornwall, on the 14th of Sept. 1786, by the ſtrong weſterly winds and tempeſtuous weather, which continued in a violent degree for ſeveral days ſucceſſively, and did much damage at that place and neighbourhood.

This monſter was firſt diſcovered by two boys, who (agreeable to the cuſtom of the place) went in ſearch of wreck ſoon after day-break; and as they ſtood on the cliff which commanded a proſpect of a ſmall ſandy cove, they, at a diſtance of about a mile, diſcovered ſomething of enormous bulk near the ſhore, and which after a ſhort time they apprehended to be the ſide or part of an unfortunate ſhip which had the preceding night been broken to pieces by the extremity of the ſhore; they immediately went towards the place with ſanguine expectation of great ſucceſs, and as they approached the ſpot (the breaking waves at times leaving it dry) they were both ſtruck with the utmoſt conſternation to perceive ſuch motions as convinced them it was ſomething which had life: they then haſtened with great fear to ſome men of their acquaintance, and related what they had ſeen in a terrifying manner. At firſt their report was not credited, but after many ſtrong and particular declarations of the fact, a great number of people ſoon collected themſelves into a body, and determined to go armed, ſome with large ſticks and pokers, other with hatchets, ſpikes, &c. which was, after ſome deliberation, carried into execution. On their coming near the ſpot they perceived it to be ſomething living, as was repreſented, and it raiſed its head, which had not before been perceived, and appeared to direct its courſe towards them. All were alarmed, ſome ſtood their ground, others poſſeſſed with greater fear turned back; they could ſee no legs to it, but it appeared to crawl on its belly, raiſing its body at times a little from the ſand. Various were the opinions about this creature; ſome ſaid it was a mermaid, others, a whale—but the greater number diſbelieving the exiſtence of the former, and adhering to the improbability of the latter, they were all equally at a loſs. When it was agreed to examine what it was, they all went towards it, and after an hour's beating, ſtabbing it, &c. it expired with a groan. Its length was found to be, from the top of its head to the end of its tail, 48 feet 10 inches, and its circumference in the largeſt part of the body, 24 feet and a half: its head was large, and prickly in the hinder part, and not formed much unlike that of a man; its eyes were greeniſh, its mouth large, its noſe flat, and from its neck to the navel, reſembling near eſt to the human kind; its back was hard, and more difficult to penetrate than the ſhell of a turtle; it had two ſhort fore-feet, formed like the paw of a monkey, and its hinder parts ſhaped ſomewhat like the hinder part of a porpoiſe; it had a large fan tail, which, when ſpread, meaſured full ſeven feet in width at the extent, and but five feet long. It is ſuppoſed a large quantity of oil will be produced from it, which, with the ſhell of its back, and its fins, are judged, if properly managed, to be of great value, and will be of conſiderable benefit to this neighbourhood. No one that has ſeen it knows its name, nor has any monſter like it ever been deſcribed in record, or come within the knowledge of this kingdom.

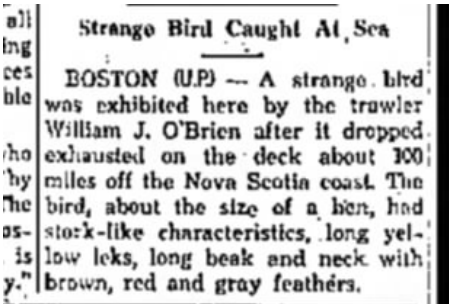
SHIP NEWS.

PETRIFIED CAT IN CONNECTICUT

Morning Herald (Halifax, Canada, July 1st 1870.)

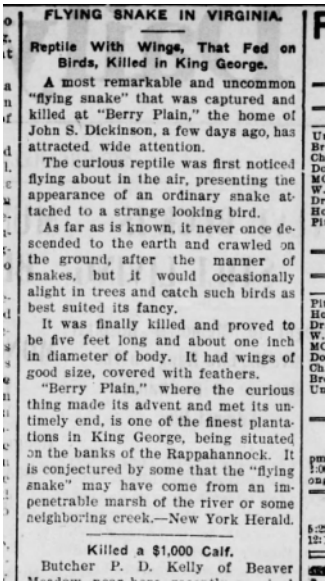
The following story is about a phenomenum I have only come across in Europe:

A PETRIFIED CAT - In demolishing the old Episcopal church in Newton, Conn last week a petrified cat was found under the floor near the pulpit. It is a curiosity. The teeth, claws, ears, legs, tail and in fact the whole animal are perfect. The cat has probably been dead a hundred years.



Strange Bird Caught At Sea

BOSTON (U.P.) — A strange bird was exhibited here by the trawler William J. O'Brien after it dropped exhausted on the deck about 100 miles off the Nova Scotia coast. The bird, about the size of a hen, had stork-like characteristics, long yellow leks, long beak and neck with brown, red and gray feathers.



FLYING SNAKE IN VIRGINIA.

Reptile With Wings, That Fed on Birds, Killed in King George.

A most remarkable and uncommon "flying snake" that was captured and killed at "Berry Plain," the home of John S. Dickinson, a few days ago, has attracted wide attention.

The curious reptile was first noticed flying about in the air, presenting the appearance of an ordinary snake attached to a strange looking bird.

As far as is known, it never once descended to the earth and crawled on the ground, after the manner of snakes, but it would occasionally alight in trees and catch such birds as best suited its fancy.

It was finally killed and proved to be five feet long and about one inch in diameter of body. It had wings of good size, covered with feathers.

"Berry Plain," where the curious thing made its advent and met its untimely end, is one of the finest plantations in King George, being situated on the banks of the Rappahannock. It is conjectured by some that the "flying snake" may have come from an impenetrable marsh of the river or some neighboring creek.—New York Herald.

Killed a $1,000 Calf.

Butcher P. D. Kelly of Beaver

The Gallup Independent
(Gallup, New Mexico)
Jan 14th 1935.Above.

VERY STRANGE CAT IN MOORESBURG, TENNESSEE,1951

Kingsport Times-News (New England?) June 14th 1951

MYSTERY CAT—A strange cat, killed recently near Mooresburg, mystifies hunters and naturalists alike. The animal, which belongs to no species known in this area, is much larger than an ordinary house cat and has a pelt like a wolverine's. Shown at lower right above, it is compared with a half-grown bobcat, upper left. (Times-News photo by Hyland.)

Hunters Kill Strange Cat; Don't Know Kind—May Be New Species

By MARY CLEMENT

He's a cat—that much is certain. But what kind of cat? He has hunters and naturalists in Kingsport completely mystified.

Much too large to be a domesticated tabby, he has fur like a wolverine's, a tail like a 'coon's, and the pointed ears of a wild cat.

Killed a few weeks ago by hunters near Mooresburg, he lived in a cave, slinking out at night to kill small game and even an occasional pig.

L. T. Godsey, a veteran hunter and taxidermist who mounted the animal, is certain it isn't some strain of domesticated cat gone wild, or even a mixture.

"I've seen all kinds of cats—cougars, mountain lions, bobcats, lynx, civet cats—but never one like that," says Godsey, who once worked with the American Museum of Natural History.

"It's easy to spot any domesticated animal, or a mixture of domesticated and wild, because the meat is light. This cat had dark meat. I'm certain it's a full-blooded animal—and a wild one.

"He lived on the ground, not in trees. I could tell that by the protective resemblance to the rocks in a cave; and by the clay mud scattered all through the fur and the smell of a cave that was about it.

"He's not like cats that come out and hunt in the open. Bobcats travel in the daytime, but not this gentleman. He stays back in holes and caverns and slinks out at night. Reminds me of a wolverine or a 'grave digger.'"

The cat, which is a full-grown male, weighed about 15-18 pounds, topping an ordinary housecat by eight or ten pounds. He was about three feet long, and stood 17-18 inches in height.

His thick, fluffy, yellowish-gray fur is streaked with black on the legs, and a heavy black stripe runs from the back of his head to the tip of his tail.

The fur, which stands up in a natural ruff around the neck, does not resemble that of any known type of wild cat, but is closer in appearance to a wolverine's fur. The tail resembles that of a raccoon or a Persian cat.

"There is a ring-tail cat," Godsey says,—"two or three of them have been killed in this country in the past fifty years or so—that has a tail similar to this, except that it has distinctive rings of dark fur. However, this cat isn't of that type."

Maybe he represents a new species.

Whatever he is, his parentage will probably remain an unsolved puzzle, to be speculated on by hunters swapping stories around a campfire at night.

Registration Of Doctors To Be In Auditorium

The registration of doctors who are required to register on January 15 will be held at the Civic Auditorium on the Johnson City Highway, Kingsport, Tenn., from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m., January 15.

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WRIGGLY WHAT-IS-IT PUZZLES MT. VERNON

Eyeless Creature With Forked Tail and No Feet Sets People Guessing.

Mount Vernon, Ill.—A highly interesting What-Is-It—up to date it has no other name—is in the possession of George D. Curtis of Mount Vernon. Mr. Curtis earnestly invites the scientific world to assist him in bestowing upon the creature a name that will serve to classify it for future reference.

The What-Is-It is alive, but not kicking. It lacks the necessary feet for that, but it is squirming in a most lively manner. It seems to be a reptile. The mystery was taken from one of the filters of the Mount Vernon water plant. It is 16 inches long.

The thing has a forked tail. It has neither fins nor gills. The head is of a darker color than the rest of the What-Is-It, which is a dark reddish brown. The head is round and the mouth is white and circular. The What-Is-It has no eyes.

Had No Eyes.

"I should say," said Mr. Curtis' butcher, "some species of eel."

"But how about the split tail?" asked Mr. Curtis.

"Oh, maybe it was intended to be born twins," replied the butcher.

"No, it is a species of garfish," ventured the grocer.

"Huh!" put in the butcher, "Gars have eyes that can see a baited hook ten yards off and enable them to go straight for it and lift the bait without danger from the hook."

"Well, eels have eyes, too; don't they?" retorted the grocer.

"I know exactly what it is," declared the city marshal, with enthusiasm.

The others gathered closer and eagerly awaited the classification of the creature.

"Well, what is it?" finally one man asked.

"You've hit it exactly—that's it," said the marshal.

"What do you mean—that's it?" asked Mr. Curtis.

"Just that—it is a What-Is-It," the marshal replied.

"You're dead wrong," remarked the Sunday school superintendent. "Every What-Is-It that I ever saw—and I used to eat 'em when I was a monkey, about a million years ago—had three eyes and a left leg."

WEIRD CRITTER IN INDIANA SEWER

Winslow Dispatch February 6th 1914. Bob Skinner suggested it could have been a lamprey.

Hunt for Live Pterodactyl.—Hunting for a live pterodactyl (says the Los Angeles correspondent of the "Northern Echo") is the mission of Messrs C. J. F. Brown and Alexander Macdonald, who are said to be connected with the British Museum. They are in the Malibu district, about 25 miles from here, which is famous for its fossils. Most scientists think the pterodactyl has long been extinct, but these collectors are inclined to believe that there may be one left in California. During a recent visit to the Malibu district they found a petrified man in a cave. They declare they were driven from the underground room by a strange reptile, which they describe as a combination of bat and lizard, and which escaped, half flying, half running, into the Santa Monica Mountains. The cave, they add, had an odour that was almost unbearable, as of carrion.

CALIFORNIA PTERODACTYL. Aberdeen Journal June 11th 1908

Story at very bottom about giant eel sent from Bob Skinner. Morning Chronicle, June 20th 1820.

PEASANTS MAY HAVE BEEN SEEING THINGS

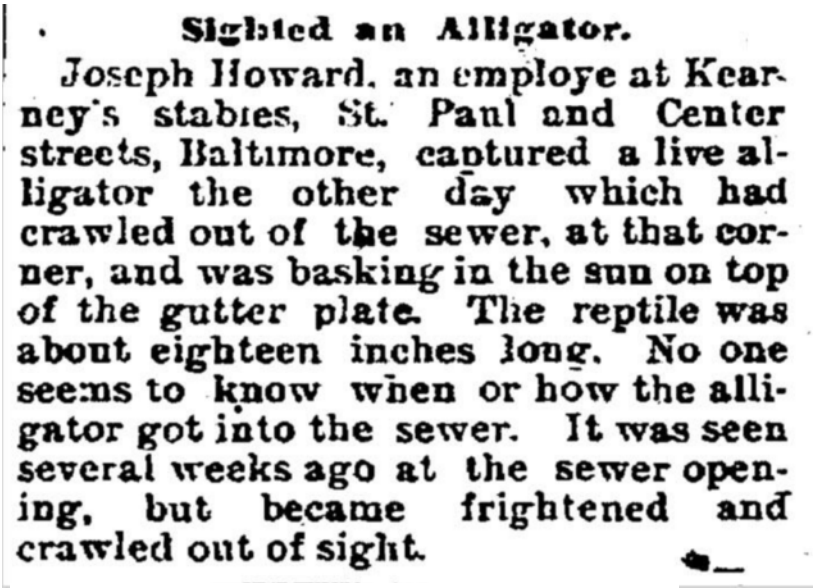
AUCH, France.—Peasants reported that a sort of landgoing sea serpent was on the loose in a nearby rural area. It is nine feet long, green with black spots, and as big around as a boa, they said. The area is famous for its fine brandy.

FRENCH "LAND SEA SERPENT"

Crossfield Chronicle July 30th 1948

ALLIGATOR IN IDAHO SEWER

Idaho Register November 20th 1891



Sighted an Alligator.

Joseph Howard, an employe at Kearney's stables, St. Paul and Center streets, Baltimore, captured a live alligator the other day which had crawled out of the sewer, at that corner, and was basking in the sun on top of the gutter plate. The reptile was about eighteen inches long. No one seems to know when or how the alligator got into the sewer. It was seen several weeks ago at the sewer opening, but became frightened and crawled out of sight.

An enormous large eel, not of the congor species, was taken by some Gentlemen, a few days ago, in a creek near the sea, at Fordyke, in Lincolnshire, belonging to Mr. Birkits, which measured *two yards and one inch* in length, and weighed *thirty-six pounds.*

Book Review

Water Horse of Lake Champlain By **Katy Elizabeth.** 2013. ISBN **9781491228845**

This excellent booklet gives a comprehensive,interesting and up to date account from earliest times up to August 2012, of "Champ" an elusive but well documented lake " monster" in Lake Champlain, New York and Vermont, U.S.A. August 2012 was the date of Katy`s sigthing : "I was looking out towards the middle of the bay and all of a sudden a large black hump surfaced I kept blinking my eyes in disbelief thinking maybe this was a Turtle or Otter…etc." I dislike the word " monster" for cryptids though to give Katy credit she uses the words "water horse", "monster" and "creature". There are some spelling mistakes but that was the fault of the publisher, not Katy. Her style is relevant and avoids hyperbole and any wild claims. There are twelve chapters , covering the history of Lake Champlain , including geological factors. Then Katy moves on to , "what does Champ look like?", "What is Champ?", " Monster Belt??", " I Caught a Baby Champ?". And more. The chapter about the baby Champ (Chapter 7) is about an incident in May 1934 when a fisherman, Joseph Briere caught an animal that looked like a cross between a sea serpent and a lizard. Whether or not this came to light because of publicity on this side of the Atlantic at that time about the Loch Ness Monster, (L.N.M) I don`t know, nor does Katy speculate. Indeed, Katy doesn`t speculate much on the L.N.M and why should she, as this is a book about "Champ"? But personally, being 1/8 Scottish (yes!) and living on this side of the " Pond", I would be interested in that angle. But to be fair in the previous chapter, no. 6, " Monster Belt ??" she mentions the L.N.M and elsewhere. I`ve always been interested in the idea, in ch 6 , that along a certain latitude in the N.Hemisphere there are lakes with "monsters". Most of the same latitude in the S.Hemisphere is ocean.

I did think that the booklet could do with a bibliogrpahy and an index but that is nit-picking. Thomas Finley is the artist. The famous 1977 Sandri Mansi sighting is well covered. Co-incidentaly 1977 was the year I became interested in cryptozoology, that being the year of the Zuiyo Maru carcass which I insist was NOT a basking shark. I first came across the Mansi photo on a card in a box of tea bags and if that isn`t surreal I don`t know what is! Looking forwards to book two this Summer. Great work Katy!

Editor`s impression of Saetón.

Rather pale coloured Common Frog,

Marple Bridge, near Stockport, England.
March 2014. © Joergen Frederiksen.